Expositions of Holy Scripture

Alexander Maclaren

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EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D., Litt. D.

ROMANS
CORINTHIANS *(To II Corinthians, Chap. V)*

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ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D., Litt. D.

ROMANS

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PART 2

THE WITNESS OF THE RESURRECTION

> 'Declared to be the Son of God with power, ... by the resurrection of the dead.'—ROMANS i. 4 (R. V.).

It is a great mistake to treat Paul's writings, and especially this Epistle, as mere theology. They are the transcript of his life's experience. As has been well said, the gospel of Paul is an interpretation of the significance of the life and work of Jesus based upon the revelation to him of Jesus as the risen Christ. He believed that he had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, and it was that appearance which revolutionised his life, turned him from a persecutor into a disciple, and united him with the Apostles as ordained to be a witness with them of the Resurrection. To them all the Resurrection of Jesus was first of all a historical fact appreciated chiefly in its bearing on Him. By degrees they discerned that so transcendent a fact bore in itself a revelation of what would become the experience of all His followers beyond the grave, and a symbol of the present life possible for them. All three of these aspects are plainly declared in Paul's writings. In our text it is chiefly the first which is made prominent. All

that distinguishes Christianity; and makes it worth believing, or mighty, is inseparably connected with the Resurrection.

I. The Resurrection of Christ declares His Sonship.

Resurrection and Ascension are inseparably connected. Jesus does not rise to share again in the ills and weariness of humanity. Risen, 'He dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.' 'He died unto sin once'; and His risen humanity had nothing in it on which physical death could lay hold. That He should from some secluded dimple on Olivet ascend before the gazing disciples until the bright cloud, which was the symbol of the Divine Presence, received Him out of their sight, was but the end of the process which began unseen in morning twilight. He laid aside the garments of the grave and passed out of the sepulchre which was made sure by the great stone rolled against its mouth. The grand avowal of faith in His Resurrection loses meaning, unless it is completed as Paul completed his 'yea rather that was raised from the dead,' with the triumphant 'who is at the right hand of God.' Both are supernatural, and the Virgin Birth corresponds at the beginning to the supernatural Resurrection and Ascension at the close. Both such an entrance into the world and such a departure from it, proclaim at once His true humanity, and that 'this is the Son of God.'

Still further, the Resurrection is God's solemn ‘Amen’ to the tremendous claims which Christ had made. The fact of His Resurrection, indeed, would not declare His divinity; but the Resurrection of One who had spoken such words does. If the Cross and a nameless grave had been the end, what a *reductio ad absurdum* that would have been to the claims of Jesus to have ever been with the Father and to be doing always the things that pleased Him. The Resurrection is God's last and loudest proclamation, ‘This is My beloved Son: hear ye Him.’ The Psalmist of old had learned to trust that his sonship and consecration to the Father made it impossible that that Father should leave his soul in Sheol, or suffer one who was knit to Him by such sacred bonds to see corruption; and the unique Sonship and perfect self-consecration of Jesus went down into the grave in the assured confidence, as He Himself declared, that the third day He would rise again. The old alternative seems to retain all its sharp points: Either Christ rose again from the dead, or His claims are a series of blasphemous arrogances and His character irremediably stained.

But we may also remember that Scripture not only represents Christ's Resurrection as a divine act but also as the act of Christ's own power. In His earthly life He asserted that His relation both to physical death and to resurrection was an entirely unique one. ‘I have power,’ said He, ‘to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again’; and yet, even in this tremendous instance

of self-assertion, He remains the obedient Son, for He goes on to say, ‘This commandment have I received of My Father.’ If these claims are just, then it is vain to stumble at the miracles which Jesus did in His earthly life. If He could strip it off and resume it, then obviously it was not a life like other men's. The whole phenomenon is supernatural, and we shall not be in the true position to understand and appreciate it and Him until, like the doubting Thomas, we fall at the feet of the risen Son, and breathe out loyalty and worship in that rapturous exclamation, ‘My Lord and my God.’

II. The Resurrection interprets Christ's Death.

There is no more striking contrast than that between the absolute non-receptivity of the disciples in regard to all Christ's plain teachings about His death and their clear perception after Pentecost of the mighty power that lay in it. The very fact that they continued disciples at all, and that there continued to be such a community as the Church, demands their belief in the Resurrection as the only cause which can account for it. If He did not rise from the dead, and if His followers did not know that He did so by the plainest teachings of common-sense, they ought to have scattered, and borne in isolated hearts the bitter memories of disappointed hopes; for if He lay in a nameless grave, and they were not sure that He was risen from the dead, His death would have been a conclusive showing up of the falsity of His claims. In it

there would have been no atoning power, no triumph over sin. If the death of Christ were not followed by His Resurrection and Ascension, the whole fabric of Christianity falls to pieces. As the Apostle puts it in his great chapter on resurrection, ‘Ye are yet in your sins.’ The forgiveness which the Gospel holds forth to men does not depend on the mercy of God or on the mere penitence of man, but upon the offering of the one sacrifice for sins in His death, which is justified by His Resurrection as being accepted by God. If we cannot triumphantly proclaim ‘Christ is risen indeed,’ we have nothing worth preaching.

We are told now that the ethics of Christianity are its vital centre, which will stand out more plainly when purified from these mystical doctrines of a Death as the sin-offering for the world, and a Resurrection as the great token that that offering avails. Paul did not think so. To him the morality of the Gospel was all deduced from the life of Christ the Son of God as our Example, and from His death for us which touches men's hearts and makes obedience to Him our joyful answer to what He has done for us. Christianity is a new thing in the world, not as moral teaching, but as moral power to obey that teaching, and that depends on the Cross interpreted by the Resurrection. If we have only a dead Christ, we have not a living Christianity.

III. Resurrection points onwards to Christ's coming again.

Paul at Athens declared in the hearing of supercilious Greek philosophers, that the Jesus, whom he proclaimed to them, was ‘the Man whom God had ordained to judge the world in righteousness,’ and that ‘He had given assurance thereof unto all men, in that He raised Him from the dead.’ The Resurrection was the beginning of the process which, from the human point of view, culminated in the Ascension. Beyond the Ascension stretches the supernatural life of the glorified Son of God. Olivet cannot be the end, and the words of the two men in white apparel who stood amongst the little group of the upward gazing friends, remain as the hope of the Church: ‘This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.’ That great assurance implies a visible corporeal return locally defined, and having for its purpose to complete the work which Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, each advanced a stage. The Resurrection is the corner-stone of the whole Christian faith. It seals the truths that Jesus is the Son of God with power, that He died for us, that He has ascended on high to prepare a place for us, that He will come again and take us to Himself. If we, by faith in Him, take for ours the women's greeting on that Easter morning, ‘The Lord hath risen indeed,’ He will come to us with His own greeting, ‘Peace be unto you.’

PRIVILEGE AND OBLIGATION

> 'To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.'—ROMANS i. 7.

This is the address of the Epistle. The first thing to be noticed about it, by way of introduction, is the universality of this designation of Christians. Paul had never been in Rome, and knew very little about the religious stature of the converts there. But he has no hesitation in declaring that they are all 'beloved of God' and 'saints.' There were plenty of imperfect Christians amongst them; many things to rebuke; much deadness, coldness, inconsistency, and yet none of these in the slightest degree interfered with the application of these great designations to them. So, then, 'beloved of God' and 'saints' are not distinctions of classes within the pale of Christianity, but belong to the whole community, and to each member of the body.

The next thing to note, I think, is how these two great terms, 'beloved of God' and 'saints,' cover almost the whole ground of the Christian life. They are connected with each other very closely, as I shall have occasion to show presently, but in the meantime it may be sufficient to mark how the one carries us deep into the heart of God and the other extends over the whole ground of our relation to Him. The one is a statement of a universal prerogative, the

other an enforcement of a universal obligation. Let us look, then, at these two points, the universal privilege and the universal obligation of the Christian life.

I. The universal privilege of the Christian life.

'Beloved of God.' Now we are so familiar with the juxtaposition of the two ideas, 'love' and 'God,' that we cease to feel the wonderfulness of their union. But until Jesus Christ had done His work no man believed that the two thoughts could be brought together.

Does God love any one? We think the question too plain to need to be put, and the answer instinctive. But it is not by any means instinctive, and the fact is that until Christ answered it for us, the world stood dumb before the question that its own heart raised, and when tortured spirits asked, 'Is there care in heaven, and is there love?' there was 'no voice, nor answer, nor any that regarded.' Think of the facts of life; think of the facts of nature. Think of sorrows and miseries and pains, and sins, and wasted lives and storms, and tempests, and diseases, and convulsions; and let us feel how true the grim saying is, that

'Nature, red in tooth and claw,
With rapine, shrieks against the creed'

that God is love.

And think of what the world has worshipped,

and of all the varieties of monstrosity, not the less monstrous because sometimes beautiful, before which men have bowed. Cruel, lustful, rapacious, capricious, selfish, indifferent deities they have adored. And then, ‘God hath established,’ proved, demonstrated ‘His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’

Oh, brethren, do not let us kick down the ladder by which we have climbed; or, in the name of a loving God, put away the Christian teaching which has begotten the conception in humanity of a God that loves. There are men to-day who would never have come within sight of that sunlight truth, even as a glimmering star, away down upon the horizon, if it had not been for the Gospel; and who now turn round upon that very Gospel which has given them the conception, and accuse it of narrow and hard thoughts of the love of God.

One of the Scripture truths against which the assailant often turns his sharpest weapons is that which is involved in my text, the Scripture answer to the other question, ‘Does not God love all?’ Yes! yes! a thousand times, yes! But there is another question, Does the love of God, to all, make His special designation of Christian men as His beloved the least unlikely? Surely there is no kind of contradiction between the broadest proclamation of the universality of the love of God and Paul's decisive declaration that, in a very deep and real manner, they who are in

Christ are the beloved of God. Surely special affection is not in its nature, inconsistent with universal beneficence and benevolence. Surely it is no exaltation, but rather a degradation of the conception of the divine love, if we proclaim its utter indifference to men's characters. Surely you are not honouring God when you say, ‘It is all the same to Him whether a man loves Him and serves Him, or lifts himself up in rebellion against Him, and makes himself his own centre, and earth his aim and his all.’ Surely to imagine a God who not only makes His sun to shine and His rains and dews to fall on the unthankful and the evil, that He may draw them to love Him, but who also is conceived as taking the sinful creature who yet cleaves to his sins to His heart, as He does the penitent soul that longs for His image to be produced in it, is to blaspheme, and not to honour the love, the universal love of God.

God forbid that any words that ever drop from my lips should seem to cast the smallest shadow of doubt on that great truth, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His Son!’ But God forbid, equally, that any words of mine should seem to favour the, to me, repellent idea that the infinite love of God disregards the character of the man on whom it falls. There are manifestations of that loving heart which any man can receive; and each man gets as much of the love of God as it is possible to pour upon him. But granite rock does not drink in the dew as a flower does; and the nature of the man on whom God's love falls

determines how much, and what manner of its manifestations shall pass into his true possession, and what shall remain without.

So, on the whole, we have to answer the questions, ‘Does God love any? Does not God love all? Does God specially love some?’ with the one monosyllable, ‘Yes.’

And so, dear brethren, let us learn the path by which we can pass into that blessed community of those on whom the fullness and sweetness and tenderest tenderness of the Father's heart will fall. ‘If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him.’ Myths tell us that the light which, at the beginning, had been diffused through a nebulous mass, was next gathered into a sun. So the universal love of God is concentrated in Jesus Christ; and if we have Him we have it; and if we have faith we have Him, and can say, ‘Neither life, nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

II. Then, secondly, mark the universal obligation of the Christian life.

‘Called to be saints,’ says my text. Now you will observe that the two little words ‘to be’ are inserted here as a supplement. They may be correct enough, but they are open to the possibility of misunderstanding, as if the saintship, to which all Christian people are

'called' was something future, and not realised at the moment. Now, in the context, the Apostle employs the same form of expression with regard to himself in a clause which illuminates the meaning of my text. 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ' says he, in the first verse, 'called to be an Apostle' or, more correctly, 'a called Apostle.' The apostleship coincided in time with the call, was contemporaneous with that which was its cause. And if Paul was an Apostle since he was called, saints are saints since *they* are called. 'The beloved of God' are 'the called saints.'

I need only observe, further, that the word 'called' here does not mean 'named' or 'designated' but 'summoned.' It describes not the name by which Christian men are known, but the thing which they are invited, summoned, 'called' by God to be. It is their vocation, not their designation. Now, then, I need not, I suppose, remind you that 'saint' and 'holy' convey precisely the same idea: the one expressing it in a word of Teutonic, and the other in one of classic derivation.

We notice that the true idea of this universal holiness which, *ipso facto*, belongs to all Christian people, is consecration to God. In the old days temple, altars, sacrifices, sacrificial vessels, persons such as priests, periods like Sabbaths and feasts, were called 'holy.' The common idea running through all these uses of the word is *belonging to God*, and that is the root notion of the New Testament 'saint' a man who

is God's. God has claimed us for Himself when He gave us Jesus Christ. We respond to the claim when we accept Christ. Henceforth we are not our own, but ‘consecrated’—that is, ‘saints.’

Now the next step is purity, which is the ordinary idea of sanctity. Purity will follow consecration, and would not be worth much without it, even if it was possible to be attained. Now, look what a far deeper and nobler idea of the service and conditions of moral goodness this derivation of it from surrender to God gives, than does a God-ignoring morality which talks and talks about acts and dispositions, and never goes down to the root of the whole matter; and how much nobler it is than a shallow religion which in like manner is ever straining after acts of righteousness, and forgets that in order to be right there must be prior surrender to God. Get a man to yield himself up to God and no fear about the righteousness. Virtue, goodness, purity, righteousness, all these synonyms express very noble things; but deep down below them all lies the New Testament idea of holiness, consecration of myself to God, which is the parent of them all.

And then the next thing to remind you of is that this consecration is to be applied all through a man's nature. Yielding yourselves to God is the talismanic secret of all righteousness, as I have said; and every part of our complex, manifold being is capable of such consecration. I hallow my heart if its love twines round His

heart. I hallow my thoughts if I take His truth for my guide, and ever seek to be led thereby in practice and in belief. I hallow my will when it bows and says, 'Speak, Lord! Thy servant heareth!' I hallow my senses when I use them as from Him, with recognition of Him and for Him. In fact, there are two ways of living in the world; and, narrow as it sounds, I venture to say there are only two. Either God is my centre, and that is holiness; or self is my centre, in more or less subtle forms, and that is sin.

Then the next step is that this consecration, which will issue in all purity, and will cover the whole ground of a human life, is only possible when we have drunk in the blessed thought 'beloved of God.' My yielding of myself to Him can only be the echo of His giving of Himself to me. He must be the first to love. You cannot argue a man into loving God, any more than you can hammer a rosebud open. If you do you spoil its petals. But He can love us into loving Him, and the sunshine, falling on the closed flower, will expand it, and it will grow by its reception of the light, and grow sunlike in its measure and according to its nature. So a God who has only claims upon us will never be a God to whom we yield ourselves. A God who has love for us will be a God to whom it is blessed that we should be consecrated, and so saints.

Then, still further, this consecration, thus built upon the reception of the divine love, and influencing our whole nature, and leading to all

purity, is a universal characteristic of Christians. There is no faith which does not lead to surrender. There is no aristocracy in the Christian Church which deserves to have the family name given especially to it. ‘Saint’ this, and ‘Saint’ that, and ‘Saint’ the other—these titles cannot be used without darkening the truth that this honour and obligation of being saints belong equally to all that love Jesus Christ. All the men whom thus God has drawn to Himself, by His love in His Son, they are all, if I may so say, objectively holy; they belong to God. But consecration may be cultivated, and must be cultivated and increased. There is a solemn obligation laid upon every one of us who call ourselves Christians, to be saints, in the sense that we have consciously yielded up our whole lives to Him; and are trying, body, soul, and spirit, ‘to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.’

Paul's letter, addressed to the ‘beloved in God,’ the ‘called saints' that are in Rome, found its way to the people for whom it was meant. If a letter so addressed were dropped in our streets, do you think anybody would bring it to you, or to any Christian society as a whole, recognising that we were the people for whom it was meant? The world has taunted us often enough with the name of saints; and laughed at the profession which they thought was included in the word. Would that their taunts had been undeserved, and that it were not true that ‘saints’ in the Church sometimes means less than ‘good men’ out of the Church! ‘Seeing that we have these

promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.'

PAUL'S LONGING [1]

> 'I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; 12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.'—ROMANS i. 11, 12.

I am not wont to indulge in personal references in the pulpit, but I cannot but yield to the impulse to make an exception now, and to let our happy circumstances mould my remarks. I speak mainly to mine own people, and I must trust that other friends who may hear or read my words will forgive my doing so.

In taking such a text as this, I desire to shelter myself behind Paul, and in expounding his feelings to express my own, and to draw such lessons as may be helpful and profitable to us all. And so there are three things in this text that I desire to note: the manly expression of Christian affection; the lofty consciousness of the purpose of their meeting; and the lowly sense that there was much to be received as well as much to be given. A word or two about each of these things is all on which I can venture.

I. First, then, notice the manly expression of Christian affection which the Apostle allows himself here.

Very few Christian teachers could or should venture to talk so much about themselves as Paul did. The strong infusion of the personal element in all his letters is so transparently simple, so obviously sincere, so free from any jarring note of affectation or unctuous sentiment that it attracts rather than repels. If I might venture upon a paradox, his personal references are instances of self-oblivion in the midst of self-consciousness.

He had never been in Rome when he wrote these words; he had no personal relations with the believers there; he had never looked them in the face; there were no sympathy and confidence between them, as the growth of years. But still his heart went out towards them, and he was not ashamed to show it. 'I *long* to see you,'—in the original the word expresses a very intense amount of yearning blended with something of regret that he had been so long kept from them.

Now it is not a good thing for people to make many professions of affection, and I think a public teacher has something better to do than to parade such feelings before his audiences. But there are exceptions to all rules, and I suppose I may venture to let my heart speak, and to say how gladly I come back to the old place, dear to me by so many sacred memories and

associations, and how gladly I reknit the bonds of an affection which has been unbroken, and deepening on both sides through thirty long years.

Dear friends! let us together thank God to-day if He has knit our hearts together in mutual affection; and if you and I can look each other, as I believe we can, in the eyes, with the assurance that I see only the faces of friends, and that you see the face of one who gladly resumes the old work and associations.

But now, dear brethren, let us draw one lesson. Unless there be this manly, honest, though oftenest silent, Christian affection, the sooner you and I part the better. Unless it be in my heart I can do you no good. No man ever touched another with the sweet constraining forces that lie in Christ's Gospel unless the heart of the speaker went out to grapple the hearts of the hearers. And no audience ever listen with any profit to a man when they come in the spirit of carping criticism, or of cold admiration, or of stolid indifference. There must be for this simple relationship which alone binds a Nonconformist preacher to his congregation, as a *sine qua non* of all higher things and of all spiritual good, a real, though oftenest it be a concealed, mutual affection and regard. We have to thank God for much of it; let us try to get more. That is all I want to say about the first point here.

II. Note the lofty consciousness of the purpose

of their meeting.

‘I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift.’ Paul knew that he had something which he could give to these people, and he calls it by a very comprehensive term, ‘some spiritual gift’—a gift of some sort which, coming from the Divine Spirit, was to be received into the human spirit.

Now that expression—a spiritual gift—in the New Testament has a variety of applications. Sometimes it refers to what we call miraculous endowments, sometimes it refers to what we may call official capacity; but here it is evidently neither the one nor the other of these more limited and special things, but the general idea of a divine operation upon the human spirit which fills it with Christian graces—knowledge, faith, love. Or, in simpler words, what Paul wanted to give them was a firmer grasp and fuller possession of Jesus Christ, His love and power, which would secure a deepening and strengthening of their whole Christian life. He was quite sure he had this to give, and that he could impart it, if they would listen to what he would say to them. But whilst thus he rises into the lofty conception of the purpose and possible result of his meeting the Roman Christians, he is just as conscious of the limitations of his power in the matter as he is of the greatness of his function. These are indicated plainly. The word which he employs here, ‘gift’ is never used in the New Testament for a thing that one man can

give to another, but is always employed for the concrete results of the grace of God bestowed upon men. The very expression, then, shows that Paul thought of himself, not as the original giver, but simply as a channel through which was communicated what God had given. In the same direction points the adjective which accompanies the noun—a '*spiritual* gift'—which probably describes the origin of the gift as being the Spirit of God, rather than defines the seat of it when received as being the spirit of the receiver. Notice, too, as bearing on the limits of Paul's part in the gift, the propriety and delicacy of the language in his statement of the ultimate purpose of the gift. He does not say 'that I may strengthen you,' which might have sounded too egotistical, and would have assumed too much to himself, but he says 'that ye may be strengthened,' for the true strengthener is not Paul, but the Spirit of God.

So, on the one hand, the Christian teacher is bound to rise to the height of the consciousness of his lofty vocation as having in possession a gift that he can bestow; on the other hand, he is bound ever to remember the limitations within which that is true—viz. that the gift is not his, but God's, and that the Spirit of the Lord is the true Giver of all the graces which may blossom when His word, ministered by human agents, is received into human hearts.

And, now, what are the lessons that I take from this? Two very simple ones. First, no

Christian teacher has any business to open his mouth, unless he is sure that he has received something to impart to men as a gift from the Divine Spirit. To preach our doubts, to preach our own opinions, to preach poor platitudes, to talk about politics and morals and taste and literature and the like in the pulpit, is profanation and blasphemy. Let no man open his lips unless he can say: 'The Lord hath showed me this; and this I bring to you as His word.' Nor has a Christian organisation any right to exist, unless it recognises the communication and reception and further spreading of this spiritual gift as its great function. Churches which have lost that consciousness, and, instead of a divine gift, have little more to offer than formal worship, or music, or entertainments, or mere intellectual discourse, whether orthodox or 'advanced,' have no right to be; and by the law of the survival of the fittest will not long be. The one thing that warrants such a relationship as subsists between you and me is this, my consciousness that I have a message from God, and your belief that you hear such from my lips. Unless that be our bond the sooner these walls crumble, and this voice ceases, and these pews are emptied, the better. 'I have,' says, Paul, 'a gift to impart; and I long to see you that I may impart it to you.' Oh! for more, in all our pulpits, of that burdened consciousness of a divine message which needs the relief of speech, and longs with a longing caught from Christ to impart its richest treasures.

That is the one lesson. And the other one is this. Have you, dear friends, received the gift that I have, under the limitations already spoken of, to bestow? There are some of you who have listened to my voice ever since you were children—some of you, though not many, have heard it for well on to thirty years. Have you taken the thing that all these years I have been —God knows how poorly, but God knows how honestly—trying to bring to you? That is, have you taken Christ, and have you faith in Him? And, as for those of you who say that you are Christians, many blessings have passed between you and me through all these years; but, dear friends, has the chief blessing been attained? Are you being strengthened day by day for the burdens and the annoyances and the sorrows of life by your coming here? Do I do you any good in that way; are you better men than when we first met together? Is Christ dearer, and more real and nearer to you; and are your lives more transparently consecrated, more manifestly the result of a hidden union with Him? Do you walk in the world like the Master, because you are members of this congregation? If so, its purpose has been accomplished. If not, it has miserably failed.

I have said that I have to thank God for the unbroken affection that has knit us together. But what is the use of such love if it does not lead onwards to this? I have had enough, and more than enough, of what you call popularity and appreciation, undeserved enough, but rendered

unstintedly by you. I do not care the snap of a finger for it by comparison with this other thing. And oh, dear brethren! if all that comes of our meeting here Sunday after Sunday is either praise or criticism of my poor words and ways, our relationship is a curse, and not a blessing, and we come together for the worse and not for the better. The purpose of the Church, and the purpose of the ministry, and the meaning of our assembling are, that spiritual gifts may be imparted, not by me alone, but by you, too, and by me in my place and measure, and if that purpose be not accomplished, all other purposes, that are accomplished, are of no account, and worse than nothing.

III. And now, lastly, note the lowly consciousness that much was to be received as well as much to be given.

The Apostle corrects himself after he has said ‘that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift,’ by adding, ‘that is, that I may be comforted (or rather, encouraged) together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.’ If his language were not so transparently sincere, and springing from deep interest in the relationship between himself and these people, we should say that it was exquisite courtesy and beautiful delicacy. But it moves in a region far more real than the region of courtesy, and it speaks the inmost truth about the conditions on which the Roman Christians should receive—viz. that they should also give. There is only one Giver who is only a

Giver, and that is God. All other givers are also receivers. Paul desired to see his Roman brethren that he might be encouraged; and when he did see them, as he marched along the Appian Way, a shipwrecked prisoner, the Acts of the Apostles tells us, ‘He thanked God and took courage.’ The sight of them strengthened him and prepared him for what lay before him.

Paul's was a richly complicated nature—firm as a rock in its will, tremulously sensitive in its sympathies; like some strongly-rooted tree with its stable stem and a green cloud of fluttering foliage that moves in the lightest air. So his spirit rose and fell according to the reception that he met from his brethren, and the manifestation of their faith quickened and strengthened his.

And he is but one instance of a universal law. All teachers, the more genuine they are, the more sympathetic they are, are the more sensitive of their environment. The very oratorical temperament places a man at the mercy of surroundings. All earnest work has ever travelling with it as its shadow seasons of deep depression; and the Christian teacher does not escape these. I am not going to speak about myself, but this is unquestionably true, that every Elijah, after the mightiest effort of prophecy, is apt to cover his head in his mantle and to say, ‘Take me away; I am not better than my fathers.’ And when a man for thirty years, amidst all the changes incident to a great city

congregation in that time, has to stand up Sunday after Sunday before the same people, and mark how some of them are stolidly indifferent, and note how others are dropping away from their faithfulness, and see empty places where loving forms used to sit—no wonder that the mood comes ever and anon, 'Then, said I, surely I have laboured in vain and spent my strength for nought.' The hearer reacts on the speaker quite as much as the speaker does on the hearer. If you have ice in the pews, that brings down the temperature up here. It is hard to be fervid amidst people that are all but dead. It is difficult to keep a fire alight when it is kindled on the top of an iceberg. And the unbelief and low-toned religion of a congregation are always pulling down the faith and the fervour of their minister, if he be better and holier, as they expect him to be, than they are.

'He did not many works because of their unbelief.' Christ knew the hampering and the restrictions of His power which came from being surrounded by a chill, unsympathetic environment. My strength and my weakness are largely due to you. And if you want your minister to preach better, and in all ways to do his work more joyfully and faithfully, the means lie largely in your own hands. Icy indifference, ill-natured interpretations, carping criticisms, swift forgetfulness of one's words, all these things kill the fervour of the pulpit.

On the other hand, the true encouragement to give a man when he is trying to do God's will, to preach Christ's Gospel, is not to pat him on the back and say, ‘What a remarkable sermon that was of yours! what a genius! what an orator!’ not to go about praising it, but to come and say, ‘Thy words have led me to Christ, and from thee I have taken the gift of gifts.’

Dear brethren, the encouragement of the minister is in the conversion and the growth of the hearers. And I pray that in this new lease of united fellowship which we have taken out, be it longer or shorter—and advancing years tell me that at the longest it must be comparatively short—I may come to you ever more and more with the lofty and humbling consciousness that I have a message which Christ has given to me, and that you may come more and more receptive—not of *my* words, God forbid—but of Christ's truth; and that so we may be helpers one of another, and encourage each other in the warfare and work to which we all are called and consecrated.

Footnote 1: Preached after long absence on account of illness.

DEBTORS TO ALL MEN

‘I am a debtor both to the Greeks
and to the Barbarians, both to the

wise and to the unwise.'—ROMANS i. 14.

No doubt Paul is here referring to the special obligation laid upon him by his divine call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. He was entrusted with the Gospel as a steward, and was therefore bound to carry it to all sorts and conditions of men. But the principle underlying the statement applies to all Christians. The indebtedness referred to is no peculiarity of the Apostolic order, but attaches to every believer. Every servant of Jesus Christ, who has received the truth for himself, has received it as a steward, and is, as such, indebted to God, from whom he got the trust, and to the men for whom he got it. The only limit to the obligation is, as Paul says in the context, 'as much as in me is.' Capacity, determined by faculties, opportunities, and circumstances, prescribes the kind and the degree of the work to be done in discharge of the obligation; but the obligation is universal. We are not at liberty to choose whether we shall do our part in spreading the name of Jesus Christ. It is a debt that we owe to God and to men. Is that the view of duty which the average Christian man takes? I am afraid it is not. If it were, our treasuries would be full, and great would be the multitude of them that preached the Word.

It is no very exalted degree of virtue to pay our debts. We do not expect to be praised for that; and we do not consider that we are at

liberty to choose whether we shall do it or not. We are dishonest if we do not. It is no merit in us to be honest. Would that all Christian people applied that principle to their religion. The world would be different, and the Church would be different, if they did.

Let me try, then, to enforce this thought of indebtedness and of common honesty in discharging the indebtedness, which underlies these words. Paul thought that he went a long way to pay his debts to humanity by carrying to everybody whom he could reach the ‘Name that is above every name.’

I. Now, first, let me say that we Christians are debtors to all men by our common manhood.

It is not the least of the gifts which Christianity has brought to the world, that it has introduced the new thought of the brotherhood of mankind. The very word ‘humanity’ is a Christian coinage, and it was coined to express the new thought that began to throb in men's hearts, as soon as they accepted the message that Jesus Christ came to give, the message of the Fatherhood of God. For it is on that belief of God's Fatherhood that the belief of man's brotherhood rests, and on it alone can it be secured and permanently based.

Here is a Jew writing to Latins in the Greek language. The phenomenon itself is a sign of a new order of things, of the rising of a flood that had surged over, and in the course of ages would

sap away and dissolve, the barriers between men. The Apostle points to two of the widest gulfs that separated men, in the words of my text. ‘Greeks and Barbarians’ divides mankind, according to race and language. ‘Wise and unwise’ divides them according to culture and intellectual capacity. Both gulfs exist still, though they have been wonderfully filled up by the influence, direct and indirect, of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The fiercest antagonisms of race which still subsist are felt to belong to a decaying order, and to be sure, sooner or later, to pass away. I suppose that the gulf made by the increased culture of modern society between civilised and the savage peoples, and, within the limits of our own land, the gulf made by education between the higher and the lower layers of our community—I speak not of higher and lower in regard to wealth or station, but in regard to intellectual acquirement and capacity —are greater than, perhaps, they ever were in the past. But yet over the gulf a bridge is thrown, and the gulf itself is being filled up. High above all the superficial distinctions which separate Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, educated and illiterate, scientific and unscientific, wise and unwise, there stretches the great rainbow of the truth that all are one in Christ Jesus. Fraternity without Fatherhood is a ghastly mockery that ended a hundred years ago in the guillotine, and to-day will end in disappointment; and it is little more than cant. But when Christianity comes and tells us that we

have one Father and one Redeemer, then the unity of the race is secured.

And that oneness which makes us debtors to all men is shown to be real by the fact that, beneath all superficial distinctions of culture, race, age, or station, there are the primal necessities and yearnings and possibilities that lie in every human soul. All men, savage or cultivated, breathe the same air, see by the same light, are fed by the same food and drink, have the same yearning hearts, the same lofty aspirations that unfulfilled are torture; the same experience of the same guilt, and, blessed be God! the same Saviour and the same salvation.

Because, then, we are all members of the one family, every man is bound to regard all that he possesses, and is, and can do, as committed to him in stewardship to be imparted to his fellows. We are not sponges to absorb, but we are pipes placed in the spring, that we may give forth the precious water of life.

Cain is not a very good model, but his question is the world's question, and it implies the expectation of a negative answer—‘Am I my brother's keeper?’ Surely, the very language answers itself, and, although Cain thinks that the only answer is ‘No,’ wisdom sees that the only answer is ‘Yes.’ For if I am my brother's brother, then surely I am my brother's keeper. We have a better example. There is another Elder Brother who has come to give to His brethren all that

Himself possessed, and we but poorly follow our Master's pattern unless we feel that the mystic tie which binds us in brotherhood to every man makes us every man's debtor to the extent of our possessions. That is the Christian truth that underlies the modern Socialistic idea, and, whatever the form in which it is ultimately brought into practice as the rule of mankind, the principle will triumph one day; and we are bound, as Christian men, to hasten the coming of its victory. We are debtors by reason of our common humanity.

II. We are debtors by our possession of the universal salvation.

The principle which I have already been laying down applies all round, to everything that we have, are, or can do. But its most stringent obligation, and the noblest field for its operations, are found in reference to the Christian man's possession of the Gospel for the joy of his own heart, and to the duties that are therein involved. Christ draws men to Himself for their own sakes, blessed be His name! but not for their own sakes only. He draws them to Himself, that they, in their turn, may draw others with whose hands theirs are linked, and so may swell the numbers of the flock that gathers round the one Shepherd. He puts the dew of His blessing into the chalice of the tiniest flower, that it may ‘share its dewdrop with another near.’ Just as every particle of inert dough as it is leavened becomes in its turn

leaven, and the medium for leavening the particle contiguous to it, so every Christian is bound, or, to use the metaphor of my text, is a debtor to God and man, to impart the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 'Greek and Barbarian,' says Paul, 'wise or unwise'; all distinctions vanish. If I can get at a man, no matter what colour, his race, his language, his capacity, his acquirements, he is my creditor, and I am defrauding him of what he has a right to expect from me if I do not do my best to bring him to Jesus Christ.

This obligation receives additional weight from the proved adaptation of the Gospel to all sorts and conditions of men. Alone of all religions has Christianity proved itself capable of dominating every type of character, of influencing every stage of civilisation, of assuming the speech of every tongue, and of wearing the garb of every race. There are other religions which are evidently destined only to a narrow field of operations, and are rigidly limited by geographical conditions, or by stages of civilisation. There are wines that are ruined by a sea voyage, and can only be drunk in the land where the vintage was gathered; and that is the condition of all the ethnic religions. Christianity alone passes through the whole earth, and influences all men. The history of missions shows us that. There has yet to be found the race that is incapable of receiving, or is beyond the need of possessing, or cannot be elevated by the operation of, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So to all men we are bound, as much as in us is, to carry the Gospel. The distinction that is drawn so often by the people who never move a finger to help the heathen either at home or abroad, between the home and the foreign field of work, vanishes altogether when we stand at the true Christian standpoint. Here is a man who wants the Gospel; I have it; I can give it to him. That constitutes a summons as imperative as if we were called by name from Heaven, and bade to go, and as much as in us is to preach the Gospel. Brethren! we do not obey the command, 'Owe no man anything,' unless, to the extent of our ability, or over the whole field which we can influence at home or abroad, we seek to spread the name of Christ and the salvation that is in Him.

III. We are debtors by benefits received.

I am speaking to men and women a very large proportion of whom get their living, and some of whom amass their wealth, by trade with lands that need the Gospel. It is not for nothing that England has won the great empire that she possesses—won it, alas! far too often by deeds that will not bear investigation in the light of Christian principle, but won it.

What do we owe to the lands that we call 'heathen'? The very speech by which we communicate with one another; the beginning of our civilisation; wide fields for expanding population and emigration; treasures of wisdom

of many kinds; an empire about which we are too fond of crowing and too reluctant to recognise its responsibilities—and Manchester its commerce and prosperity! Did God put us where we are as a nation only in order that we might carry the gifts of our literature, great as that is; of our science, great as that is; of our law, blessed as that is; of our manufactures, to those distant lands? The best thing that we can give is the thing that all of us can help to give—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 'Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'

IV. Lastly, we are debtors by injuries inflicted.

Many subject-races seem destined to fade away by contact with our race; and if we think of the nameless cruelties, and the iliad of woes which England's possession of this great Colonial Empire has had accompanying it, we may feel that the harm in many aspects outweighs the good, and that it had been better for these men to be left suckled in creeds outworn, and ignorant of our civilisation, than to receive from us the fatal gifts that they often have received. I do not wish to exaggerate, but if you will take the facts of the case as brought out by people that have no Christian prejudices to serve, I think you will acknowledge that we as a nation owe a debt of reparation to the barbarians and the unwise.

What about killing African tribes by the

thousand with the vile stuff that we call rum, and send to them in exchange for their poor commodities? What about introducing new diseases, the offspring of vice, into the South Sea Islands, decimating and all but destroying the population? Is it not true that, as the prophet wailed of old about a degenerate Israel, we may wail about the beach-combers and other loafers that go amongst savage lands from England —'Through you the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles.' A Hindoo once said to a missionary, 'Your Book is very good. If you were as good as your Book you would conquer India in five years.' That may be true or it may not, but it gives us the impression that is produced by godless Englishmen on heathen peoples. We are taking away their religion from them, necessarily, as the result of education and contact with European thought. And if we do not substitute for it the one faith that elevates and saves, the last state of that man will be worse than the first.

We can almost hear the rattle of the guns on the north-west frontier of India to-day. There is another specimen of the injuries inflicted. This is not the place to talk politics, but I feel that this is the place to ask this question, 'Are Christian principles to have anything to do in determining national actions?' Is it Christian to impose our yoke on unwilling tribes who have as deep a love for independence as the proudest Englishmen of us all, and as good a right to it? Are punitive expeditions and Maxim guns

instalments of our debt to all men? I wonder what Jesus Christ, who died for Afridis and Orakzais and all the rest of them, thinks about such conduct?

Brethren, we are debtors to all men. Let us do our best to influence national action in accordance with the brotherhood which has been revealed to us by the Elder Brother of us all; and let us, at least for our own parts, recognise, and, as much as in us is, discharge the debt which, by our common humanity, and by our possession of the universal Gospel we owe to all men, and which is made more weighty by the benefits we receive from many, and by the injuries which England has inflicted on not a few. Else shall we hear rise above all the voices that palliate crime, on the plea of 'State necessity,' the stern words of the Master, 'In thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of poor innocents.' We are debtors; let us pay our debts.

THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD [1]

> 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'—ROMANS i. 16.

To preach the Gospel in Rome had long been the goal of Paul's hopes. He wished to do in the

centre of power what he had done in Athens, the home of wisdom; and with superb confidence, not in himself, but in his message, to try conclusions with the strongest thing in the world. He knew its power well, and was not appalled. The danger was an attraction to his chivalrous spirit. He believed in flying at the head when you are fighting with a serpent, and he knew that influence exerted in Rome would thrill through the Empire. If we would understand the magnificent audacity of these words of my text we must try to listen to them with the ears of a Roman. Here was a poor little insignificant Jew, like hundreds of his countrymen down in the Ghetto, one who had his head full of some fantastic nonsense about a young visionary whom the procurator of Syria had very wisely put an end to a while ago in order to quiet down the turbulent province; and he was going into Rome with the notion that his word would shake the throne of the Cæsars. What proud contempt would have curled their lips if they had been told that the travel-stained prisoner, trudging wearily up the Appian Way, had the mightiest thing in the world entrusted to his care! Romans did not believe much in ideas. Their notion of power was sharp swords and iron yokes on the necks of subject peoples. But the history of Christianity, whatever else it has been, has been the history of the supremacy and the revolutionary force of ideas. Thought is mightier than all visible forces. Thought dissolves and reconstructs. Empires and

institutions melt before it like the carbon rods in an electric lamp; and the little hillock of Calvary is higher than the Palatine with its regal homes and the Capitoline with its temples: ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.’

Now, dear friends, I have ventured to take these great words for my text, though I know, better than any of you can tell me, how sure my treatment of them is to enfeeble rather than enforce them, because I, for my poor part, feel that there are few things which we, all of us, people and ministers, need more than to catch some of the infection of this courageous confidence, and to be fired with some spark of Paul's enthusiasm for, and glorying in, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I ask you, then, to consider three things: (1) what Paul thought was the Gospel? (2) what Paul thought the Gospel was? and (3) what he felt about the Gospel?

I. What Paul thought was the Gospel?

He has given to us in his own rapid way a summary statement, abbreviated to the very bone, and reduced to the barest elements, of what he meant by the Gospel. What was the irreducible minimum? The facts of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as you will find written in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. So, then, to begin with, the Gospel is not a statement of principles,

but a record of facts, things that have happened in this world of ours. But the least part of a fact is the visible part of it, and it is of no significance unless it has explanation, and so Paul goes on to bind up with the facts an explanation of them. The mere fact that Jesus, a young Nazarene, was executed is no more a gospel than the other one, that two brigands were crucified beside Him. But the fact that could be seen, plus the explanation which underlies and interprets it, turns the chronicle into a gospel, and the explanation begins with the name of the Sufferer; for if you want to understand His death you must understand who it was that died. His death is a thought pathetic in all aspects, and very precious in many. But when we hear ‘Christ died according to the Scriptures,’ the whole symbolism of the ancient ritual and all the glowing anticipations of the prophets rise up before us, and that death assumes an altogether different aspect. If we stop with ‘Jesus died,’ then that death may be a beautiful example of heroism, a sweet, pathetic instance of innocent suffering, a conspicuous example of the world's wages to the world's teachers, but it is little more. If, however, we take Paul's words upon our lips, ‘Brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached ... how that Christ died ... according to the Scriptures,’ the fact flashes up into solid beauty, and becomes the Gospel of our salvation. And the explanation goes on, ‘How that Christ died for our sins.’ Now, I may be very blind, but I

venture to say that I, for my part, cannot see in what intelligible sense the Death of Christ can be held to have been for, or on behalf of, our sins—that is, that they may be swept away and we delivered from them—unless you admit the atoning nature of His sacrifice for sins. I cannot stop to enlarge, but I venture to say that any narrower interpretation evacuates Paul's words of their deepest significance. The explanation goes on, ‘And that He was buried.’ Why that trivial detail? Partly because it guarantees the fact of His Death, partly because of its bearing on the evidences of His Resurrection. ‘And that He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures.’ Great fact, without which Christ is a shattered prop, and ‘ye are yet in your sins.’

But, further, notice that my text is also Paul's text for this Epistle, and that it differs from the condensed summary of which I have been speaking only as a bud with its petals closed differs from one with them expanded in their beauty. And now, if you will take the words of my text as being the keynote of this letter, and read over its first eight chapters, what is the Apostle talking about when he in them fulfils his purpose and preaches ‘the Gospel’ to them that are at Rome also? Here is, in the briefest possible words, his summary—the universality of sin, the awful burden of guilt, the tremendous outlook of penalty, the impossibility of man rescuing himself or living righteously, the Incarnation, and Life, and Death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, the hand

of faith grasping the offered blessing, the indwelling in believing souls of the Divine Spirit, and the consequent admission of man into a life of sonship, power, peace, victory, glory, the child's place in the love of the Father from which nothing can separate. These are the teachings which make the staple of this Epistle. These are the explanations of the weighty phrases of my text. These are at least the essential elements of the Gospel according to Paul.

But he was not alone in this construction of his message. We hear a great deal to-day about Pauline Christianity, with the implication, and sometimes with the assertion, that he was the inventor of what, for the sake of using a brief and easily intelligible term, I may call Evangelical Christianity. Now, it is a very illuminating thought for the reading of the New Testament that there are the three sets of teaching, roughly, the Pauline, Petrine, and Johannine, and you cannot find the distinctions between these three in any difference as to the fundamental contents of the Gospel; for if Paul rings out, ‘God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,’ Peter declares, ‘Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,’ and John, from his island solitude, sends across the waters the hymn of praise, ‘Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.’ And so the proud declaration of the Apostle, which he dared not have ventured upon in the face of the acrid criticism he had to front unless he had

known he was perfectly sure of his ground, is natural and warranted—'Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach.'

We are told that we must go back to the Christ of the Gospels, the historical Christ, and that He spoke nothing concerning all these important points that I have mentioned as being Paul's conception of the Gospel. Back to the Christ of the Gospels by all means, if you will go to the Christ of all the Gospels and of the whole of each Gospel. And if you do, you will go back to the Christ who said, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' You will go back to the Christ who said, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' You will go back to the Christ who said, 'The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' You will go back to the Christ who bade His followers hold in everlasting memory, not the tranquil beauty of His life, not the persuasive sweetness of His gracious words, not the might of His miracles of blessing, but the mysterious agonies of His last hours, by which He would have us learn that there lie the secret of His power, the foundation of our hopes, the stimulus of our service.

Now, brethren, I have ventured to dwell so long upon this matter, because it is no use talking about the Gospel unless we understand what we mean by it, and I, for my part, venture to say that that is what Paul meant by it, and

that is what I mean by it. I plead for no narrow interpretation of the phrases of my text. I would not that they should be used to check in the smallest degree the diversities of representation which, according to the differences of individual character, must ever prevail in the conceptions which we form and which we preach of this Gospel of Jesus Christ. I want no parrot-like repetition of a certain set of phrases embodied, however great may be their meanings, in every sermon. And I would that the people to whom those truths are true would make more allowance than they sometimes do for the differences to which I have referred, and would show a great deal more sympathy than they often do to those, especially those young men, who, with their faces toward Christ, have not yet grown to the full acceptance of all that is implied in those gracious words. There is room for a whole world of thought in the Gospel of Christ as Paul conceived it, with all the deep foundations of implication and presupposition on which it rests, and with all the, as yet, undiscovered range of conclusions to which it may lead. Remember that the Cross of Christ is the key to the universe, and sends its influence into every region of human thought.

II. What Paul thought the Gospel was.

‘The power of God unto salvation.’ There was in the background of the Apostle's mind a kind of tacit reference to the antithetical power that he was going up to meet, the power of Rome,

and we may trace that in the words of my text. Rome, as I have said, was the embodiment of physical force, with no great faith in ideas. And over against this carnal might Paul lifts the undissembled weakness of the Cross, and declares that it is stronger than man, ‘the power of God unto salvation.’ Rome is high in force; Athens is higher; the Cross is highest of all, and it comes shrouded in weakness having a poor Man hanging dying there. That is a strange embodiment of divine power. Yes, and because so strange, it is so touching, and so conquering. The power that is draped in weakness is power indeed. Though Rome's power did make for righteousness sometimes, yet its stream of tendency was on the whole a power to destruction and grasped the nations of the earth as some rude hand might do rich clusters of grapes and squeeze them into a formless mass. The tramp of the legionary meant death, and it was true in many respects of them what was afterwards said of later invaders of Europe, that where their horses’ hoofs had once stamped no grass ever grew. Over against this terrific engine of destruction Paul lifts up the meek forces of love which have for their sole object the salvation of man.

Then we come to another of the keywords about which it is very needful that people should have deeper and wider notions than they often seem to cherish. What is salvation? Negatively, the removal and sweeping away of all evil, physical and moral, as the schools speak.

Positively, the inclusion of all good for every part of the composite nature of a man which the man can receive and which God can bestow. And that is the task that the Gospel sets to itself. Now, I need not remind you how, for the execution of such a purpose, it is plain that something else than man's power is absolutely essential. It is only God who can alter my relation to His government. It is only God who can trammel up the inward consequences of my sins and prevent them from scourging me. It is only God who can bestow upon my death a new life, which shall grow up into righteousness and beauty, caught of, and kindred to, His own. But if this be the aim of the Gospel, then its diagnosis of man's sickness is a very much graver one than that which finds favour amongst so many of us now. Salvation is a bigger word than any of the little gospels that we hear clamouring round about us are able to utter. It means something a great deal more than either social or intellectual, or still more, material or political betterment of man's condition. The disease lies so deep, and so great are the destruction and loss partly experienced, and still more awfully impending over every soul of us, that something else than tinkering at the outsides, or dealing, as self-culture does, with man's understanding or, as social gospels do, with man's economical and civic condition, should be brought to bear. Dear brethren, especially you Christian ministers, preach a social Christianity by all means, an applied

Christianity, for there does lie in the Gospel of Jesus Christ a key to all the problems that afflict our social condition. But be sure first that there is a Christianity before you talk about applying it. And remember that the process of salvation begins in the deep heart of the individual and transforms him first and foremost. The power is 'to every one that believeth.' It is power in its most universal sweep. Rome's Empire was wellnigh ubiquitous, but, blessed be God, the dove of Christ flies farther than the Roman eagle with beak and claw ready for rapine, and wherever there are men here is a Gospel for them. The limitation is no limitation of its universality. It is no limitation of the claim of a medicine to be a panacea that it will only do good to the man who swallows it. And that is the only limitation of which the Gospel is susceptible, for we have all the same deep needs, the same longings; we are fed by the same bread, we are nourished by the same draughts of water, we breathe the same air, we have the same sins, and, thanks be to God, we have the same Saviour. 'The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

Now before I pass from this part of my subject there is only one thing more that I want to say, and that is, that you cannot apply that glowing language about 'the power of God unto salvation' to anything but the Gospel that Paul preached. Forms of Christianity which have lost the significance of the Incarnation and Death of Jesus Christ, and which have struck out or

obscured the central facts with which I have been dealing, are not, never were, and, I may presumptuously venture to say, never will be, forces of large account in this world. Here is a clock, beautiful, chased on the back, with a very artistic dial-plate, and works modelled according to the most approved fashion, but, somehow or other, the thing won't go. Perhaps the mainspring is broken. And so it is only the Gospel, as Paul expounds it and expands it in this Epistle, that is ‘the power of God unto salvation.’ Dear brethren, in the course of a sermon like this, of course, one must lay himself open to the charge of dogmatising. That cannot be helped under the conditions of my space. But let me say as my own solemn conviction—I know that that is not worth much to you, but it is my justification for speaking in such a fashion—let me say as my solemn conviction that you may as well take the keystone out of an arch, with nothing to hold the other stones together or keep them from toppling in hideous ruin on your unfortunate head, as take the doctrine that Paul summed up in that one word out of your conception of Christianity and expect it to work. And be sure of this, that there is only one Name that lords it over the demons of afflicted humanity, and that if a man goes and tries to eject them with any less potent charm than Paul's Gospel, they will turn upon him with ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?’

III. What Paul felt about this Gospel.

His restrained expression, ‘I am not ashamed,’ is the stronger for its very moderation. It witnesses to the fixed purpose of his heart and attitude of his mind, whilst it suggests that he was well aware of all the temptations in Rome to being ashamed of it there. Think of what was arrayed against him—venerable religion, systematised philosophies, bitter hatred and prejudice, material power and wealth. These were the brazen armour of Goliath, and this little David went cheerily down into the valley with five pebble stones in a leathern wallet, and was quite sure how it was going to end. And it ended as he expected. His Gospel shook the kingdom of the Roman, and cast it in another mould.

And there are temptations, plenty of them, for us, dear friends, to-day, to bate our confidence. The drift of what calls itself influential opinion is anti-supernatural, and we all are conscious of the presence of that element all round about us. It tells with special force upon our younger men, but it affects us all. In this day, when a large portion of the periodical press, which does the thinking for most of us, looks askance at these truths, and when, on the principle that in the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is the king, popular novelists become our theological tutors, and when every new publishing season brings out a new conclusive destruction of Christianity, which supersedes last season's equally complete destruction, it is hard for some of us to keep our flags flying. The ice round

about us will either bring down the temperature, or, if it stimulates us to put more fuel on the fire, perhaps the fire may melt it. And so the more we feel ourselves encompassed by these temptations, the louder is the call to Christian men to cast themselves back on the central verities, and to draw at first hand from them the inspiration which shall be their safety. And how is that to be done? Well, there are many ways by which thoughtful, and cultivated, students may do it. But may I venture to deal here rather with ways which all Christian people have open before them? And I am bold to say that the way to be sure of 'the power of God unto salvation' is to submit ourselves continually to its cleansing and renewing influence. This certitude, brethren, may be contributed to by books of apologetics, and by other sources of investigation and study which I should be sorry indeed to be supposed in any degree to depreciate. But the true way to get it is, by deep communion with the living God, to realise the personality of Jesus Christ as present with us, our Friend, our Saviour, our Sanctifier by His Holy Spirit. Why, Paul's Gospel was, I was going to say, altogether—that would be an exaggeration—but it was to a very large extent simply the generalisation of his own experience. That is what all of us will find to be the Gospel that we have to preach. 'We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.' And it was because this man could say so assuredly—because the depths of his own conscience and the witness within him bore testimony to it—'He

loved me and gave Himself for me,' that he could also say, 'The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Go down into the depths, brother and friend; cry to Him out of the depths. Then you will feel His strong, gentle grip lifting you to the heights, and that will give power that nothing else will, and you will be able to say, 'I have heard Him myself, and I know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

But there is yet another source of certitude open to us all, and that is the history of the centuries. Our modern sceptics, attacking the truth of Christianity mostly from the physical side, are strangely blind to the worth of history. It is a limitation of faculty that besets them in a good many directions, but it does not work anywhere more fatally than it does in their attitude towards the Gospel. After all, Jesus Christ spoke the ultimate word when He said, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' And it is so, because just as what is morally wrong cannot be politically right, so what is intellectually false cannot be morally good. Truth, goodness, beauty, they are but three names for various aspects of one thing, and if it be that the difference between B.C. and A.D. has come from a Gospel which is not the truth of God, then all I can say is, that the richest vintage that ever the world saw, and the noblest wine of which it ever drank, did grow upon a thorn. I know that the Christian Church has sinfully and tragically failed to present Christ adequately to the world.

But for all that, 'Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord'; and nobler manners and purer laws have come in the wake of this Gospel of Jesus Christ. And as I look round about upon what Christianity has done in the world, I venture to say, 'Show us any system of religion or of no religion that has done that or anything the least like it, and then we will discuss with you the other evidences of the Gospel.'

In closing these words, may I venture relying on the melancholy privilege of seniority, to drop for a minute or two into a tone of advice? I would say, do not be frightened out of your confidence either by the premature paean of victory from the opposite camp, or by timid voices in our own ranks. And that you may not be so frightened, be sure to keep clear in your mind the distinction between the things that can be shaken and the kingdom that cannot be moved. It is bad strategy to defend an elongated line. It is cowardice to treat the capture of an outpost as involving the evacuation of the key of the position. It is a mistake, to which many good Christian people are sorely tempted in this day, to assert such a connection between the eternal Gospel and our deductions from the principles of that Gospel as that the refutation of the one must be the overthrow of the other. And if it turns out to be so in any case, a large part of the blame lies upon those good and mistaken people who insist that everything must be held or all must be abandoned. The burning questions of this day about the genuineness of the books of

Scripture, inspiration, inerrancy, and the like, are not so associated with this word, 'God so loved the world ... that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,' as that the discovery of errors in the Second Book of Chronicles shakes the foundations of the Christian certitude. In a day like this truth must change its vesture. Who believes that the Dissenting Churches of England are the highest, perfect embodiment of the Kingdom of God? And who believes that any creed of man's making has in it all and has in it only the everlasting Gospel? So do not be frightened, and do not think that when the things that can be shaken are removed, the things that cannot be shaken are at all less likely to remain. Depend upon it, the Gospel, whose outline I have imperfectly tried to set before you now, will last as long as men on earth know they are sinners and need a Saviour. Did you ever see some mean buildings that have by degrees been gathered round the sides of some majestic cathedral, and do you suppose that the sweeping away of those shanties would touch the solemn majesty of the mediæval glories of the building that rises above them? Take them away if need be, and it, in its proportion, beauty, strength, and heavenward aspiration, will stand more glorious for the sweeping away. Preach positive truth. Do not preach doubts. You remember Mr. Kingsley's book *Yeast*. Its title was its condemnation. Yeast is not meant to be drunk; it is meant to be kept in the dark till the process of fermentation goes

on and it works itself clear, and then you may bring it out. Do not be always arguing with the enemy. It is a great deal better to preach the truth. Remember what Jesus said: 'Let them alone, they are blind leaders of the blind, they will fall into the ditch.' It is not given to every one of us to conduct controversial arguments in the pulpit. There are some much wiser and abler brethren amongst us than you or I who can do it. Let us be contented with, not the humbler but the more glorious, office of telling what we have known, leaving it, as it will do, to prove itself. You remember what the old woman, who had been favoured by her pastor with an elaborate sermon to demonstrate the existence of God, said when he had finished; 'Well, I believe there is a God, for all the gentleman says.'

As one who sees the lengthening shadows falling over the darkening field, may I say one word to my junior brethren, with all whose struggles and doubts and difficulties I, for one, do most tenderly sympathise? I beseech them—though, alas! the advice condemns the giver of it as he looks back over long years of his ministry—to be faithful to the Gospel how that 'Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' Dear young friends, if you only go where Paul went, and catch the inspiration that he caught there, your path will be clear. It was in contact with Christ, whose passion for soul-winning brought Him from heaven, that Paul learned his passion for soul-winning. And if you and I are touched with the divine enthusiasm,

and have that aim clear before us, we shall soon find out that there is only one power, one name given under heaven among men whereby we can accomplish what we desire—the name of 'Jesus Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us.' If our aim is clear before us it will prescribe our methods, and if the inspiration of our ministry is, 'I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,' then, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, they shall know that there hath been a Prophet among them.

Footnote 1: Preached before Baptist Union.

WORLD-WIDE SIN AND WORLD-WIDE REDEMPTION

'Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22.

> Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: 23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: 24. Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'—ROMANS iii. 19-26.

Let us note in general terms the large truths which this passage contains. We may mass these under four heads:

I. Paul's view of the purpose of the law.

He has been quoting a mosaic of Old Testament passages from the Psalms and Isaiah. He regards these as part of 'the law,' which term, therefore, in his view, here includes the whole previous revelation, considered as making known God's will as to man's conduct. Every word of God, whether promise, or doctrine, or specific command, has in it some element bearing on conduct. God reveals nothing only in order that we may know, but all that, knowing, we may do and be what is pleasing in His sight.

All His words are law.

But Paul sets forth another view of its purpose here; namely, to drive home to men's consciences the conviction of sin. That is not the only purpose, for God reveals duty primarily in order that men may do it, and His law is meant to be obeyed. But, failing obedience, this second purpose comes into action, and His law is a swift witness against sin. The more clearly we know our duty, the more poignant will be our consciousness of failure. The light which shines to show the path of right, shines to show our deviations from it. And that conviction of sin, which it was the very purpose of all the previous Revelation to produce, is a merciful gift; for, as the Apostle implies, it is the prerequisite to the faith which saves.

As a matter of fact, there was a far profounder and more inward conviction of sin among the Jews than in any heathen nation. Contrast the wailings of many a psalm with the tone in Greek or Roman literature. No doubt there is a law written on men's hearts which evokes a lower measure of the same consciousness of sin. There are prayers among the Assyrian and Babylonian tablets which might almost stand beside the Fifty-first Psalm; but, on the whole, the deep sense of sin was the product of the revealed law. The best use of our consciousness of what we ought to be, is when it rouses conscience to feel the discordance with it of what we are, and so drives us to Christ. Law, whether in the Old

Testament, or as written in our hearts by their very make, is the slave whose task is to bring us to Christ, who will give us power to keep God's commandments.

Another purpose of the law is stated in verse 21, as being to bear witness, in conjunction with the prophets, to a future more perfect revelation of God's righteousness. Much of the law was symbolic and prophetic. The ideal it set forth could not always remain unfulfilled. The whole attitude of that system was one of forward-looking expectancy. There is much danger lest, in modern investigations as to the authorship, date, and genesis of the Old Testament revelation, its central characteristic should be lost sight of; namely, its pointing onwards to a more perfect revelation which should supersede it.

II. Paul's view of universal sinfulness.

He states that twice in this passage (vs. 20 to 24), and it underlies his view of the purpose of law. In verse 20 he asserts that ‘by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,’ and in verses 23 and 24 he advances from that negative statement to the positive assertion that all have sinned. The impossibility of justification by the works of the law may be shown from two considerations: one, that, as a matter of fact, no flesh has ever done them all with absolute completeness and purity; and, second, that, even if they had ever been so done, they would not

have availed to secure acquittal at a tribunal where motive counts for more than deed. The former is the main point with Paul.

In verse 23 the same fact of universal experience is contemplated as both positive sin and negative falling short of the ‘glory’ (which here seems to mean, as in John v. 44, xii. 43, approbation from God). ‘There is no distinction,’ but all varieties of condition, character, attainment, are alike in this, that the fatal taint is upon them all. ‘We have, all of us, one human heart.’ We are alike in physical necessities, in primal instincts, and, most tragically of all, in the common experience of sinfulness.

Paul does not mean to bring all varieties of character down to one dead level, but he does mean to assert that none is free from the taint. A man need only be honest in self-examination to endorse the statement, so far as he himself is concerned. The Gospel would be better understood if the fact of universal sinfulness were more deeply felt. Its superiority to all schemes for making everybody happy by rearrangements of property, or increase of culture, would be seen through; and the only cure for human misery would be discerned to be what cures universal sinfulness.

III. So we have next Paul's view of the remedy for man's sin. That is stated in general terms in verses 21, 22. Into a world of sinful men comes streaming the light of a ‘righteousness of God.’

That expression is here used to mean a moral state of conformity with God's will, imparted by God. The great, joyful message, which Paul felt himself sent to proclaim, is that the true way to reach the state of conformity which law requires, and which the unsophisticated, universal conscience acknowledges not to have been reached, is the way of faith.

The message is so familiar to us that we may easily fail to realise its essential greatness and wonderfulness when first proclaimed. That God should give righteousness, that it should be ‘of God,’ not only as coming from Him, but as, in some real way, being kindred with His own perfection; that it should be brought to men by Jesus Christ, as ancient legends told that a beneficent Titan brought from heaven, in a hollow cane, the gift of fire; and that it should become ours by the simple process of trusting in Jesus Christ, are truths which custom has largely robbed of their wonderfulness. Let us meditate more on them till they regain, by our own experience of their power, some of the celestial light which belongs to them.

Observe that in verse 22 the universality of the redemption which is in Christ is deduced from the universality of sin. The remedy must reach as far as the disease. If there is no difference in regard to sin, there can be none in regard to the sweep of redemption. The doleful universality of the covering spread over all nations, has corresponding to it the blessed

universality of the light which is sent forth to flood them all. Sin's empire cannot stretch farther than Christ's kingdom.

IV. Paul's view of what makes the Gospel the remedy.

In verses 21 and 22 it was stated generally that Christ was the channel, and faith the condition, of righteousness. The personal object of faith was declared, but not the special thing in Christ which was to be trusted in. That is fully set forth in verses 24-26. We cannot attempt to discuss the great words in these verses, each of which would want a volume. But we may note that ‘justified’ here means to be accounted or declared righteous, as a judicial act; and that justification is traced in its ultimate source to God's ‘grace,’—His own loving disposition—which bends to unworthy and lowly creatures, and is regarded as having for the medium of its bestowal the ‘redemption’ that is in Christ Jesus. That is the channel through which grace comes from God.

‘Redemption’ implies captivity, liberation, and a price paid. The metaphor of slaves set free by ransom is exchanged in verse 25 for a sacrificial reference. A propitiatory sacrifice averts punishment from the offerer. The death of the victim procures the life of the worshipper. So, a propitiatory or atoning sacrifice is offered by Christ's blood, or death. That sacrifice is the ransom-price through which our captivity is

ended, and our liberty assured. As His redemption is the channel ‘through’ which God's grace comes to men, so faith is the condition ‘through’ which (ver. 25) we make that grace ours.

Note, then, that Paul does not merely point to Jesus Christ as Saviour, but to His death as the saving power. We are to have faith in Jesus Christ (ver. 22). But that is not a complete statement. It must be faith in His propitiation, if it is to bring us into living contact with His redemption. A gospel which says much of Christ, but little of His Cross, or which dilates on the beauty of His life, but stammers when it begins to speak of the sacrifice in His death, is not Paul's Gospel, and it will have little power to deal with the universal sickness of sin.

The last verses of the passage set forth another purpose attained by Christ's sacrifice; namely, the vindication of God's righteousness in forbearing to inflict punishment on sins committed before the advent of Jesus. That Cross rayed out its power in all directions—to the heights of the heavens; to the depths of Hades (Col. i. 20); to the ages that were to come, and to those that were past. The suspension of punishment through all generations, from the beginning till that day when the Cross was reared on Calvary, was due to that Cross having been present to the divine mind from the beginning. ‘The judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted,’ or left unpunished. There

would be a blot on God's government, not because it was so severe, but because it was so forbearing, unless His justice was vindicated, and the fatal consequences of sin shown in the sacrifice of Christ. God could not have shown Himself just, in view either of age-long forbearance, or of now justifying the sinner, unless the Cross had shown that He was not immorally indulgent toward sin.

NO DIFFERENCE

> 'There is no difference.'—ROMANS iii. 22.

The things in which all men are alike are far more important than those in which they differ. The diversities are superficial, the identities are deep as life. Physical processes and wants are the same for everybody. All men, be they kings or beggars, civilised or savage, rich or poor, wise or foolish, cultured or illiterate, breathe the same breath, hunger and thirst, eat and drink, sleep, are smitten by the same diseases, and die at last the same death. We have all of us one human heart. Tears and grief, gladness and smiles, move us all. Hope, fear, love, play the same music upon all heart-strings. The same great law of duty over-arches every man, and the same heaven of God bends above him.

Religion has to do with the deep-seated

identities and not with the superficial differences. And though there have been many aristocratic religions in the world, it is the great glory of Christianity that it goes straight to the central similarities, and brushes aside, as of altogether secondary importance, all the subordinate diversities, grappling with the great facts which are common to humanity, and with the large hopes which all may inherit.

Paul here, in his grand way, triumphs and rises above all these small differences between man and man, more pure or less pure, Jew or Gentile, wise or foolish, and avers that, in regard of the deepest and most important things, ‘there is no difference,’ and so his Gospel is a Gospel for the world, because it deals with all men on the same level. Now I wish to work out this great glory and characteristic of the Gospel system in a few remarks, and to point out to you the more important of these things in which all men, be they what or who they may, stand in one category and have identical experiences and interests.

I. First, there is no difference in the fact of sin.

Now let us understand that the Gospel does not assert that there is no difference in the degrees of sin. Christianity does not teach, howsoever some of its apostles may seem to have taught, or unconsciously lent themselves to representations which imply the view that there was no difference between a man who ‘did by

nature the things contained in the law,' as Paul says, and the man who set himself to violate law. There is no such monstrous teaching in the New Testament as that all blacks are the same shade, all sin of the same gravity, no such teaching as that a man that tries according to his light to do what is right stands on exactly the same level as the man who flouts all such obligations, and has driven the chariots of his lusts and passions through every law that may stand in his way.

But even whilst we have to insist upon that, that the teaching of my text is not of an absolute identity of criminality, but only an universal participation in criminality, do not let us forget that, if you take the two extremes, and suppose it possible that there were a best man in all the world, and a worst man in all the world, the difference between these two is not perhaps so great as at first sight it looks. For we have to remember that motives make actions, and that you cannot judge of these by considering those, that 'as a man thinketh in his heart,' and not as a man does with his hands, 'so is he.' We have to remember, also, that there may be lives, sedulously and immaculately respectable and pure, which are white rather with the unwholesome leprosy of disease than with the wholesome purity of health.

In Queen Elizabeth's time, the way in which they cleaned the hall of a castle, the floor of which might be covered with remnants of food

and all manner of abominations, was to strew another layer of rushes over the top of the filth, and then they thought themselves quite neat and respectable. And that is what a great many of you do, cover the filth well up with a sweet smelling layer of conventional proprieties, and think yourselves clean, and the pinks of perfection. God forbid that I should say one word that would seem to cast any kind of slur upon the effort that any man makes to do what he knows to be right, but this I proclaim, or rather my text proclaims for me, that, giving full weight and value to all that, and admitting the existence of variations in degree, the identity is deeper than the diversity; and there is 'not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not.'

Oh, dear friends! it is not a question of degree, but of direction; not how far the ship has gone on her voyage, but how she heads. Good and evil are the same in essence, whatever be their intensity and whatever be their magnitude. Arsenic is arsenic, whether you have a ton of it or a grain; and a very small dose will be enough to poison. The Gospel starts with the assertion that there is no difference in the fact of sin. The assertion is abundantly confirmed. Does not conscience assent? We all admit 'faults,' do we not? We all acknowledge 'imperfections.' It is that little word 'sin' which seems to bring in another order of considerations, and to command the assent of conscience less readily. But sin is nothing except fault considered in

reference to God's law. Bring the notion of God into the life, and ‘faults’ and ‘slips’ and ‘weaknesses,’ and all the other names by which we try to smooth down the ugliness of the ugly thing, start up at once into their tone, magnitude, and importance, and stand avowed as *sins*.

Well now, if there be, therefore, this universal consciousness of imperfection, and if that consciousness of imperfection has only need to be brought into contact with God, as it were, to flame thus, let me remind you, too, that this fact of universal sinfulness puts us all in one class, no matter what may be the superficial difference. Shakespeare and the Australian savage, the biggest brain and the smallest, the loftiest and the lowest of us, the purest and the foulest of us, we all come into the same order. It is a question of classification. ‘The Scripture hath concluded all under sin,’ that is to say, has shut all men up as in a prison. You remember in the French Revolution, all manner of people were huddled indiscriminately into the same dungeon of the Paris prisons. You would find a princess and some daughter of shame from the gutters; a boor from the country and a landlord, a count, a marquis, a *savant*, a philosopher and an illiterate workman, all together in the dungeons. They kept up the distinctions of society and of class with a ghastly mockery, even to the very moment when the tumbrils came for them. And so here are we all, in some sense inclosed within the solemn cells of this great prison-house, and

whether we be wise or foolish, we are prisoners, whether we have titles or not, we are prisoners. You may be a student, but you are a sinner: you may be a rich Manchester merchant, but you are a sinner; you may be a man of rank, but you are a sinner. Naaman went to Elisha and was very much offended because Elisha treated him as a leper who happened to be a nobleman. He wanted to be treated as a nobleman who happened to be a leper. And that is the way with a great many of us; we do not like to be driven into one class with all the crowd of evildoers. But, my friend, ‘there is no difference.’ ‘All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.’

II. Again, there is no difference in the fact of God's love to us.

God does not love men because of what they are, therefore He does not cease to love them because of what they are. His love to the sons of men is not drawn out by their goodness, their morality, their obedience, but it wells up from the depths of His own heart, because ‘it is His nature and property,’ and if I may so say, He cannot help loving. You do not need to pump up that great affection by any machinery of obedience and of merits; it rises like the water in an Artesian well, of its own impulse, with ebullient power from the central heat, and spreads its great streams everywhere. And therefore, though our sin may awfully disturb our relations with God, and may hurt and harm us in a hundred ways, there is one thing it

cannot do, it cannot stop Him from loving us. It cannot dam back His great love, which flows out for ever towards all His creatures, and laves them all in its gentle, strong flood, from which nothing can draw them away. 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being,' and to live in Him, whatever else it may mean—and it means a great deal more—is most certainly to live in His love. A man can as soon pass out of the atmosphere in which he breathes as he can pass out of the love of God. We can no more travel beyond that great over-arching firmament of everlasting love which spans all the universe than a star set in the blue heavens can transcend the liquid arch and get beyond its range. 'There is no difference' in the fact that all men, unthankful and evil as they are, are grasped and held in the love of God.

But there *is* a difference. Sin cannot dam God's love back, but sin has a terrible power in reference to the love of God. Two things it can do. It can make us incapable of receiving the highest blessings of that love. There are many mercies which God pours 'upon the unthankful and the evil.' These are His least gifts; His highest and best cannot be given to the unthankful and the evil. They would if they could, but they cannot, because they cannot be received by them. You can shut the shutters against the light; you can close the vase against the stream. You cannot prevent its shining, you cannot prevent its flowing, but you can prevent yourself from receiving its loftiest and best

blessings.

And another awful power that my sin has in reference to God's love is, that it can modify the form which God's love takes in its dealings with me. We may force Him to do ‘His work,’ ‘His strange work,’ as Isaiah calls it, and to punish when He would fain only succour and comfort and bless. Just as a fog in the sky does not touch the sun, but turns it to our eyes into a fiery ball, red and lurid, so the mist of my sin coming between me and God, may, to my apprehension and to my capacity of reception, solemnly make different that great love of His. But yet there is no difference in the fact of God's love to us.

III. Thirdly, there is no difference in the purpose and power of Christ's Cross for us all.

‘He died for all.’ The area over which the purpose and the power of Christ's death extend is precisely conterminous with the area over which the power of sin extends. It cannot be—blessed be God!—that the raven Sin shall fly further than the dove with the olive branch in its mouth. It cannot be that the disease shall go wider than the cure. And so, dear friends, I have to come to you now with this message. No matter what a man is, how far he has gone, how sinful he has been, how long he has stayed away from the sweetness and grace of that great sacrifice on the Cross, that death was for him. The power of Christ's sacrifice makes possible the forgiveness of all the sins of all the world,

past, present, and to come. The worth of that sacrifice, which was made by the willing surrender of the Incarnate Son of God to the death of the Cross, is sufficient for the ransom price of all the sins of all men.

Nor is it only the power of the Cross which is all embracing, but its purpose also. In the very hour of Christ's death, there stood, clear and distinct, before His divine omniscience, each man, woman, and child of the race. And for them all, grasping them all in the tenderness of His sympathy and in the clearness of His knowledge, in the design of His sufferings for them all, He died, so that every human being may lay his hand on the head of the sacrifice, and *know* 'his guilt was there,' and may say, with as triumphant and appropriating faith as Paul did, 'He loved *me*,' and in that hour of agony and love 'gave Himself for *me*.'

To go back to a metaphor already employed, the prisoners are gathered together in the prison, not that they may be slain, but 'God hath included them all,' shut them all up, 'that He might have mercy upon all.' And so, as it was in the days of Christ's life upon earth, so is it now, and so will it be for ever. All the crowd may come to Him, and whosoever comes 'is made whole of whatsoever disease he had.' There are no incurables nor outcasts. 'There is no difference.'

IV. Lastly, there is no difference in the way

which we must take for salvation.

The only thing that unites men to Jesus Christ is faith. You must trust Him, you must trust the power of His sacrifice, you must trust the might of His living love. You must trust Him with a trust which is self-distrust. You must trust Him out and out. The people with whom Paul is fighting, in this chapter, were quite willing to admit that faith was the thing that made Christians, but they wanted to tack on something besides. They wanted to tack on the rites of Judaism and obedience to the moral law. And ever since men have been going on in that erroneous rut. Sometimes it has been that people have sought to add a little of their own morality; sometimes to add ceremonies and sacraments. Sometimes it has been one thing and sometimes it has been another; but there are not two ways to the Cross of Christ, and to the salvation which He gives. There is only one road, and all sorts of men have to come by it. You cannot lean half upon Christ and half upon yourselves, like the timid cripple that is not quite sure of the support of the friendly arm. You cannot eke out the robe with which He will clothe you with a little bit of stuff of your own weaving. It is an insult to a host to offer to pay for entertainment. The Gospel feast that Christ provides is not a social meal to which every guest brings a dish. Our part is simple reception, we have to bring empty hands if we would receive the blessing.

We must put away superficial differences. The

Gospel is for the world, therefore the act by which we receive it must be one which all men can perform, not one which only some can do. Not wisdom, nor righteousness, but faith joins us to Christ. And, therefore, people who fancy themselves wise or righteous are offended that 'special terms' are not made with them. They would prefer to have a private portion for themselves. It grates against the pride of the aristocratic class, whether it be aristocratic by culture—and that is the most aristocratic of all—or by position, or anything else—it grates against their pride to be told: 'You have to go in by that same door that the beggar is going in at'; and 'there is no difference.' Therefore, the very width of the doorway, that is wide enough for all the world, gets to be thought narrowness, and becomes a hindrance to our entering. As Naaman's servant put a common-sense question to him, so may I to you. 'If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?' Ay! that you would! 'How much more when He says "Wash and be clean!"' There is only one way of getting dirt off, and that is by water. There is only one way of getting sin off, and that is by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is only one way of having that blood applied to your heart, and that is trusting Him. 'The common salvation' becomes ours when we exercise 'the common faith.' 'There is no difference' in our sins. Thank God! 'there is no difference' in the fact that He grasps us with His love. There is no difference in the fact that Jesus

Christ has died for us all. Let there be no difference in our faith, or there will be a difference, deep as the difference between Heaven and Hell; the difference between them that believe and them that believe not, which will darken and widen into the difference between them that are saved and them that perish.

LET US HAVE PEACE

> 'Let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'—ROMANS v. 1. (R. V.).

In the rendering of the Revised Version, 'Let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' the alteration is very slight, being that of one letter in one word, the substitution of a long 'o' for a short one. The majority of manuscripts of authority read 'let us have,' making the clause an exhortation and not a statement. I suppose the reason why, in some inferior MSS., the statement takes the place of the exhortation is because it was felt to be somewhat of a difficulty to understand the Apostle's course of thought. But I shall hope to show you that the true understanding of the context, as well as of the words I have taken for my text, requires the exhortation and not the affirmation.

One more remark of an introductory

character: is it not very beautiful to see how the Apostle here identifies himself, in all humility, with the Christians whom he is addressing, and feels that he, Apostle as he is, has the same need for the same counsel and stimulus that the weakest of those to whom he is writing have? It would have been so easy for him to isolate himself, and say, 'Now you have peace with God; see that you keep it.' But he puts himself into the same class as those whom he is exhorting, and that is what all of us have to do who would give advice that will be worth anything or of any effect. He does not stand upon a little molehill of superiority, and look down upon the Roman Christians, and imply that they have needs that he has not, but he exhorts himself too, saying, 'Let all of us who have obtained like precious faith, which is alike in an Apostle and in the humblest believer, have peace with God.'

Now a word, first, about the meaning of this somewhat singular exhortation.

There is a theory of man and his relation to God underlying it, which is very unfashionable at present, but which corresponds to the deepest things in human nature, and the deepest mysteries in human history, and that is, that something has come in to produce the totally unnatural and monstrous fact that between God and man there is not amity or harmony. Men, on their side, are alienated, because their wills are rebellious and their aims diverse from God's

purpose concerning them. And—although it is an awful thing to have to say, and one from which the sentimentalism of much modern Christianity weakly recoils—on God's side, too, the relation has been disturbed, and ‘we are by nature the children of wrath, even as others’; not of a wrath which is unloving, not of a wrath which is impetuous and passionate, not of a wrath which seeks the hurt of its objects, but of a wrath which is the necessary antagonism and recoil of pure love from such creatures as we have made ourselves to be. To speak as if the New Testament taught that ‘reconciliation’ was lop-sided—which would be a contradiction in terms, for reconciliation needs two to make it—to talk as if the New Testament taught that reconciliation was only man's putting away his false relation to God, is, as I humbly think, to be blind to its plainest teaching. So, there being this antagonism and separation between God and man, the Gospel comes to deal with it, and proclaims that Jesus Christ has abolished the enmity, and by His death on the Cross has become our peace; and that we, by faith in that Christ, and grasping in faith His death, pass from out of the condition of hostility into the condition of reconciliation.

With this by way of basis, let us come back to my text. It sounds strange; ‘Therefore, being justified by faith, let up have peace.’ ‘Well,’ you will say, ‘but is not all that you have been saying just this, that to be justified by faith, to be declared righteous by reason of faith in Him

who makes us righteous, is to have peace with God? Is not your exhortation an entirely superfluous one?' No doubt that is what the old scribe thought who originated the reading which has crept into our Authorised Version. The two things do seem to be entirely parallel. To be justified by faith is a certain process, to have peace with God is the inseparable and simultaneous result of that process itself. But that is going rather too fast. 'Being justified by faith let us have peace with God,' really is just this—see that you abide where you are; keep what you have. The exhortation is not to attain peace, but retain it. 'Hold fast that thou hast; let no man take thy crown.' 'Being justified by faith' cling to your treasure and let nothing rob you of it—'let us have peace with God.'

Now a word, in the next place, as to the necessity and importance of this exhortation.

There underlies it, this solemn thought, which Christian people, and especially some types of Christian doctrine, do need to have hammered into them over and over again, that we hold the blessed life itself, and all its blessings, only on condition of our own cooperation in keeping them; and that just as physical life dies, unless by reception of food we nourish and continue it, so a man that is in this condition of being justified by faith, and having peace with God, needs, in order to the permanence of that condition, to give his utmost effort and diligence. It will all go if he do not. All the old

state will come back again if we are slothful and negligent. We cannot keep the treasure unless we guard it. And just because we have it, we need to put all our mind, the earnestness of our will, and the concentration of our efforts, into the specific work of retaining it.

For, consider how manifold and strong are the forces which are always working against our continual possession of this justification by faith, and consequent peace with God. There are all the ordinary cares and duties and avocations and fortunes of our daily life, which, indeed, may be so hallowed in their motives and in their activities, as that they may be turned into helps instead of hindrances, but which require a great deal of diligence and effort in order that they should not work like grains of dust that come between the parts of some nicely-fitting engine, and so cause friction and disaster. There are all the daily tasks that tempt us to forget the things that we only know by faith, and to be absorbed in the things that we can touch and taste and handle. If a man is upon an inclined plane, unless he is straining his muscles to go upwards, gravitation will make short work of him, and bring him down. And unless Christian men grip hard and continually that sense of having fellowship and peace with God, as sure as they are living they will lose the clearness of that consciousness, and the calm that comes from it. For we cannot go into the world and do the work that is laid upon us all without there being possible hostility to the Christian life in

everything that we meet. Thank God there is possible help, too, and whether our daily calling is an enemy or a friend to our religion depends upon the earnestness and continuousness of our own efforts. But there is a worse force than these external distractions working to draw us away, one that we carry within, in our own vacillating wills and wayward hearts and treacherous affections and passions that usually lie dormant, but wake up sometimes at the most inopportune periods. Unless we keep a very tight hand upon ourselves, certainly these will rob us of this consciousness of being justified by faith which brings with it peace with God that passes understanding.

In the Isle of Wight massive cliffs rise hundreds of feet above the sea, and seem as if they were as solid as the framework of the earth itself. But they rest upon a sharply inclined plane of clay, and the moisture trickles through the rifts in the majestic cliffs above, and gets down to that slippery substance and makes it like the greased ways down which they launch a ship; and away goes the cliff one day, with its hundreds of feet of buttresses that have fronted the tempest for centuries, and it lies toppled in hideous ruin on the beach below. We have all a layer of 'blue slipper' in ourselves, and unless we take care that no storm-water finds its way down through the chinks in the rocks above they will slide into awful ruin. 'Being justified, let us have peace with God,' and remember that the exhortation is enforced not only by a

consideration of the many strong forces which tend to deprive us of this peace, but also by a consideration of the hideous disaster that comes upon a man's whole nature if he loses peace with God. For there is no peace with ourselves, and there is no peace with man, and there is no peace in face of the warfare of life and the calamities that are certainly before us all, unless, in the deepest sanctuary of our being, there is the peace of God because in our consciences there is peace with God. If I desire to be at rest —and there is no blessedness but rest—if I desire to know the sovereign joy of tranquillity, undisturbed by my own stormy passions or by any human enmity, and to have even the ‘beasts of the field at peace with’ me, and all things my helpers and allies, there is but one way to realise the desire, and that is the retention of peace with God that comes with being justified by faith.

Lastly, a word or two as to the ways by which this exhortation can be carried into effect.

I have tried to explain how the peace of which my text speaks comes originally through Christ's work laid hold of by my faith, and now I would say only three things.

Retain the peace by the exercise of that same faith which at first brought it. Next, retain it by union with that same Lord from whom you at first received it. Very significantly, in the immediate context, we have the Apostle drawing

a broad distinction between the benefits which we have received from Christ's death, and those which we shall receive through His life. And that is the best commentary on the words of my text. ‘If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.’ So let our faith grasp firmly the great twin facts of the Christ who died that He might abolish the enmity, and bring us peace; and of the Christ who lives in order that He may pour into our hearts more and more of His own life, and so make us more and more in His own image. And the last word that I would say, in addition to these two plain, practical precepts is, let your conduct be such as will not disturb your peace with God. For if a man lets his own will rise up in rebellion against God's, whether that divine will command duty or impose suffering, away goes all his peace. There is no possibility of the tranquil sense of union and communion with my Father in heaven lasting when I am in rebellion against Him. The smallest sin destroys, for the time being, our sense of forgiveness and our peace with God. The blue surface of the lake, mirroring in its unmoved tranquillity the sky and the bright sun, or the solemn stars, loses all that reflected heaven in its heart when a cat's paw of wind ruffles its surface. If we would keep our hearts as mirrors, in their peace, of the peace in the heavens that shine down on them, we must fence them from the winds of evil passions and rebellious wills. ‘Oh! that thou

wouldest hearken unto Me, then had thy peace been like a river.'

ACCESS INTO GRACE

> 'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.'—ROMANS v. 2.

I may be allowed to begin with a word or two of explanation of the terms of this passage. Note then, especially, that *also* which sends us back to the previous clause, and tells us that our text adds something to what was spoken of there. What was spoken of there? 'The peace of God' which comes to a man by Jesus Christ through faith, the removal of enmity, and the declaration of righteousness. But that peace with God, which is the beginning of everything in the Christian view, is only the beginning, and there is much to follow. While, then, there is a progress clearly marked in the words of our text, and 'access into this grace wherein we stand' is something more than, and after, the 'peace with God,' mark next the similarity of the text and the preceding verse. The two great truths in the latter, Christ's mediation or intervention, and our faith as the condition by which we receive the blessings which are brought to us in and through Him, are both repeated, with no unmeaning tautology, but with profound significance in our text—'By whom also we have access'—as well as—'the

peace of God'—'access *by faith* into this grace.' So then, for the initial blessing, and for all the subsequent blessings of the Christian life, the way is the same. The medium and channel is one, and the act by which we avail ourselves of the blessings coming through that one medium is the same. Now the language of my text, with its talking about access, faith, and grace, sounds to a great many of us, I am afraid, very hard and remote and technical. And there are not wanting people who tell us that all that terminology in the New Testament is like a dying brand in the fire, where the little kernel of glowing heat is getting covered thicker and thicker with grey ashes. Yes; but if you blow the ashes off, the fire is there all the same. Let us try if we can blow the ashes off.

This text seems to me in its archaic phraseology, only to need to be pondered in order to flash up into wonderful beauty. It carries in it a magnificent ideal of the Christian life, in three things: the Christian place, 'access into grace'; the Christian attitude, 'wherein we stand'; and the Christian means of realising that ideal, 'through Christ' and 'by faith.' Now let us look at these three points.

I. The Christian Place.

There is clearly a metaphor here, both in the word 'access' and in that other one 'stand.' 'The grace' is supposed as some ample space into which a man is led, and where he can continue,

stand, and expatiate. Or, we may say, it is regarded as a palace or treasure-house into which we can enter. Now, if we take that great New Testament word ‘grace,’ and ponder its meanings, we find that they run something in this fashion. The central thought, grand and marvellous, which is enshrined in it, and which often is buried for careless ears, is that of the active love of God poured out upon inferiors who deserve something very different. Then there follows a second meaning, which covers a great part of the ground of the use of the phrase in the New Testament, and that is the communication of that love to men, the specific and individualised gifts which come out of that great reservoir of patient, pardoning, condescending, and bestowing love. Then there may be taken into view a meaning which is less prominent in Scripture but not absent, namely, the resulting beauty of character. A gracious soul ought to be, and is, a graceful soul; a supreme loveliness is imparted to human nature by the communication to it of the gifts which are the results of the undeserved, free, and infinite love of God.

Now if we take all these three thoughts as blended together in the grand metaphor of the Apostle, of the ample space into which the Christian man passes, we get such lessons as this. A Christian life may, and therefore should, be suffused with a continual consciousness of the love of God. That would change everything in it. Here is some great sweep of rolling country,

perhaps a Highland moor: the little tarns on it are grey and cold, the vegetation is gloomy and dark, dreariness is over all the scene, because there is a great pall of cloud drawn beneath the blue. But the sun pierces with his lances through the grey, and crumples up the mists, and sends them flying beneath the horizon. Then what a change in the landscape! All the tarns that looked black and wicked are now infantile in their innocent blue and sunny gladness, and every dimple in the heights shows, and all the heather burns with the sunshine that falls upon it. So my lonely doleful life, if that light from God, the beam of His love, shines down upon it, rises into nobility, and flashes into beauty, and is calm and fair and great, as nothing else can make it. You may dwell in love by dwelling in God, and then your lives will be fair. You have access into the grace; see that you go there. They tell us that nightingales sing by the wayside by preference, and we may have in our lives, singing a quiet tune, the continual thought of the love of God, even whilst life's highway is dusty and rough, and our feet are often weary in treading it. A Christian life may be, and therefore should be, suffused with the sense of the abiding love of God.

Take the other meaning of the word, the secondary and derived meaning, the communication of that love to us, and that leads us to say that a Christian life may, and therefore should, be enriched with continual gifts from God's fullness. I said that the Apostle was using a

metaphor here, regarding the grace as being an ample space into which a man was admitted, or we may say that he is thinking of it as a great treasure-house. We have the right of entrance there, where on every side, as it were, lie ingots of uncoined gold, and masses of treasure, and we may have just as much or as little as we choose. It is entirely in our own determination how much of the wealth of God we shall possess. We have access to the treasure-house; and this permit is put into our hands: ‘Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’ The size of the sack that the man brings, in the old story, determined the amount of wealth that he carried away. Some of you bring very tiny baskets and expect little and desire little; you get no more than you desired and expected.

That wealth, the fullness of God, takes the shape of, as well as is determined in its measure by the magnitude of, the vessel into which it is put. It is multiform, and we get whatever we desire, and whatever either our characters or our circumstances require. The one gift assumes all forms, just as water poured into a vase takes the shape of the vase into which it is poured. The same gift unfolds itself in an infinite variety of manners, according to the needs of the man to whom it is given; just as the writer's pen, the carpenter's hammer, the farmer's ploughshare, are all made out of the same metal. So God's grace comes to you in a different shape from that in which it comes to me, according to our different callings and needs, as fixed by our

circumstances, our duties, our sorrows, our temptations.

So, brethren, how shameful it is that, having the possibility of so much, we should have the actuality of so little. There is an old story about one of our generals in India long ago, who, when he came home, was accused of rapacity because he had brought away so much treasure from the Rajahs whom he had conquered, and his answer to the charge was, 'I was surprised at my own moderation.' Ah! there are a great many Christian people who ought to be ashamed of their moderation. They have gone into the treasure-house; stacks of jewels, jars of gold on all sides of them—and they have been content to come away with some one poor little coin, when they might have been 'rich beyond the dreams of avarice.' Brethren, you have 'access' to the fullness of God. Whose fault is it if you are empty?

Then, further, I said there was another meaning in these great words. The love which may suffuse our lives, the gifts, the consequence of that love, which may enrich our lives, should, and in the measure in which they are received will, adorn and make beautiful our lives. For 'grace' means loveliness as well as goodness, and the God who is the fountain of it all is the fountain of 'whatsoever things are fair,' as well as of whatsoever things are good. That suggests two considerations on which I have no time to dwell. One is that the highest beauty is

goodness, and unless the art of a nation learns that, its art will become filthy and a minister of sin. They talk about ‘Art for Art's sake.’ Would that all these poets and painters who are trying to find beauty in corruption—and there is a phosphorescent glimmer in rotting wood, and a prismatic colouring on the scum of a stagnant pond—would that all those men who are seeking to find beauty apart from goodness, and so are turning a divine instinct into a servant of evil, would learn that the true gracefulness comes from the grace which is the fullness of God given unto men.

But there is another lesson, and that is that Christian people who say that they have their lives irradiated by the love of God, and who profess to be receiving gifts from His full hand, are bound to take care that their goodness is not ‘harsh and crabbed,’ as not only ‘dull fools suppose’ it to be, but as it sometimes is, but is musical and fair. You are bound to make your goodness attractive, and to show that the things that are ‘of good report’ are likewise the ‘things that are lovely.’

II. And so, now, turn to the second point here, viz. the Christian attitude.

‘The grace wherein ye *stand*’; that word is very emphatic here, and does not merely mean ‘continue,’ but it suggests what I have put into that phrase, the Christian attitude.

Two things are implied. One is that a life thus

suffused by the love, and enriched by the gifts, and adorned by the loveliness that come from God, will be stable and steadfast. Resistance and stability are implied in the words. One very important item in determining a man's power of resistance, and of standing firm against whatever assaults may be hurled against him, is the sort of footing that he has. If you stand on slippery mud, or on the ice of a glacier, you will find it hard to stand firm; but if you plant your foot on the grace of God, then you will be able to 'withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.' And how does a man plant his foot on the grace of God? simply by trusting in God, and not in himself. So that the secret of all steadfastness of life, and of all successful resistance to the whirling onrush of temptations and of difficulties, is to set your foot upon that rock, and then your 'goings' will be established.

Jesus Christ brings to us, in the gift of life in Him, stability which will check the vacillations of our own hearts. We go up and down, we yield when pressure is brought to bear against us, we are carried off our feet often by the sudden swirl of the stream, and the fitful blast of the wind. But His grace comes in, and will make us able to stand against all assaults. Our poor natures, necessarily changeable, and sinfully vacillating and weak, will be uniform, in the measure in which the grace of God comes into our hearts. Just as in these so-called petrifying wells, they take a bit of cloth, a bird's nest, a billet of wood, and plunge it into the water, and the mineral

held in solution there infiltrates into the substance of the thing plunged in, and makes it firm and inflexible: so let us plunge our poor, changeful, vacillating resolutions, our wayward, wandering hearts, our passions, so easily excited by temptation, into that great fountain, and there will filter into our flexibility what will make it firm, and into our changefulness what will give in us some faint copy of the divine immutability, and we shall stand fast in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Further, in regard to this attitude, which is the result of the possession of grace, we may say that it indicates not only stability and steadfastness, but erectness, as in opposition to crouching or bowing. A man's independence is guaranteed by his dependence upon, and his possession of, that communicated grace of God. And so you have the fact that the phase of the Christian teaching which has laid most stress on the decrees and sovereign will of God, on divine grace in fact, and too little upon the human side —the phase which is roughly described as Calvinism—has underlain the liberties of Europe, and has stiffened men into the rejection of all priestly and civic domination. ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,’ and if a man has in his heart the grace of God, then he stands erect as a man. ‘Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men.’ The Christian democracy, the Christian rejection of all sacerdotal and other domination, flows from the access of each individual Christian to the

fountain of all wisdom, the only source of law and command, the inspirer of all strength, the giver of all grace. By faith ye stand. 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.'

III. Lastly, and only a word; we have here the Christian way of entrance into grace.

I have already remarked on the emphasis with which, both in my text and in the preceding clause, there are laid down the two conditions of possessing this grace, or the peace which precedes it: 'By Christ—through faith.' Notice, too, that Jesus Christ gives us 'access.' Now that expression is but an imperfect rendering of the original. If it were not for its trivial associations, one might read instead of 'access,' introduction, 'by whom we have introduction into this grace wherein we stand.' The thought is that Jesus Christ secures us entry into this ample space, this treasure-house, as some court officer might take by the hand a poor rustic, standing on the threshold of the palace, and lead him through all the glittering series of unfamiliar splendour, and present him at last in the central ring around the king. The reality that underlies the metaphor is plain. We sinners can never pass into that central glory, nor ever possess those gifts of grace, unless the barrier that stands between us and God, between us and His highest gifts of love, is swept away.

I recall an old legend where two knights are

represented as seeking to enter a palace, where there is a mysterious fire burning in the middle of the portal. One of them tries to pass through, and recoils scorched; but when the other essays an entrance the fierce fire sinks, and the path is cleared. Jesus Christ has died, and I say it with all reverence, as His blood touches the fire it flickers down and the way is opened 'into the holiest of all, whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' He both brings the grace and makes it possible that we should go in where the grace is.

But Jesus Christ's work is nothing to you unless your personal faith comes in, and so that is pointed to in the second of the clauses here: '*By faith* we have access.' That is no arbitrary appointment. It lies in the very nature of the gift and of the recipient. How can God give access into that grace to a man who shrinks from being near Him; who does not want 'access,' and who could not use the grace if he had it? How can God bestow inward and spiritual gifts upon any man who closes his heart against them, and will not have them? My faith is the condition; Christ is the Giver. If I ally myself to Him by my faith, He gives to me. If I do not, with all the will to do it, He cannot bestow His best gifts any more than a man who stretches out his hand to another sinking in the flood can lift him out, and set him on the safe shore, if the drowning man's hand is not stretched out to grasp the rescuer's outstretched hand.

Brethren, God is infinitely willing to give the

choicest gifts of His love to us all, to gladden, to enrich, to adorn, to make stable and erect. But He cannot give them unless you will trust Him. 'It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.' That alabaster box is brought to earth. It was broken on the Cross that 'the house' might be 'filled with the odour of the ointment.' Our faith is the only condition; it is only the condition, but it is the indispensable condition, of our being anointed with that fragrant anointing. He, and He only, can give us the fullness of God.

THE SOURCES OF HOPE

> 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope.'—ROMANS v. 2-4.

We have seen in a previous sermon that the Apostle in the foregoing context is sketching a grand outline of the ideal Christian life, as all rooted in 'being justified by faith,' and flowering into 'peace with God,' 'access into grace,' and a firm stand against all antagonists and would-be masters. In our text he advances to complete the outline by sketching the true Christian attitude towards the future. I have ventured to take so pregnant and large a text, because there is a

very striking and close connection throughout the verses, which is lost unless we take them together. Note, then, ‘we rejoice in hope,’ ‘we glory in tribulation.’ Now, it is one word in the original which is diversely rendered in these two clauses by ‘rejoice’ and ‘glory.’ The latter is a better rendering than the former, because the original expression designates not only the emotion of joy, but the expression of it, especially in words. So it is frequently rendered in the New Testament by the word ‘boast,’ which, of course, has unpleasant associations, which scarcely fit it for use here. So then you see Paul regards it as possible for, and more than possibly characteristic of, a Christian, that the very same emotion should he excited by that great bright future hope, and by the blackness of present sorrow. That is strong meat; and so he goes on to explain how he thinks it can and must be so, and points out that trouble, through a series of results, arrives at last at this, that if it is rightly borne, it flashes up into greater brightness the hope which has grasped the glory of God. So then we have here, not only a wonderful designation of the object around which Christian hope twines its tendrils, but of the double source from which that hope may come, and of the one emotion with which Christian people should front the darkness of the present and the brightness of the future. Ah! how different our lives would be if that ideal of a steadfast hope and an untroubled joy were realised by each of us. It may be. It should be. So

I ask you to look at these three points which I have suggested.

I. That wonderful designation of the one object of Christian hope which should fill, with an uncoruscating and unflickering light, all that dark future.

'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Now, I suppose I need not remind you that that phrase 'the glory of God' is, in the Old Testament, used especially to mean the light that dwelt between the cherubim above the mercy-seat; the symbol of the divine perfections and the token of the Divine Presence. The reality of which it was a symbol is the total splendour, so to speak, of that divine nature, as it rays itself out into all the universe. And, says Paul, the true hope of the Christian man is nothing less than that of that glory he shall be, in some true sense, and in an eternally growing degree, the real possessor. It is a tremendous claim, and one which leads us into deep places that I dare not venture into now, as to the resemblance between the human person and the Divine Person, notwithstanding all the differences which of course exist, and which only a presumptuous form of religion has ventured to treat as transitory or insignificant. Let me use a technical word, and say that it is no pantheistic absorption in an impersonal Light, no Nirvana of union with a vague whole, which the Apostle holds out here, but it is the closest possible union, personality being saved and individual consciousness being intensified. It is

the clothing of humanity with so much of that glory as can be imparted to a finite creature. That means perfect knowledge, perfect purity, perfect love, and that means the dropping away of all weaknesses and the access of strange new powers, and that means the end of the schism between 'will' and 'ought,' and of the other schism between 'will' and 'can.' It means what this Apostle says: 'Whom He justified them He also glorified,' and what He says again, 'We all, beholding as in a glass'—or rather, perhaps, mirroring as a glass does—'the glory, are changed into the same image.'

The very heart of Christianity is that the Divine Light of which that Shekinah was but a poor and transitory symbol has 'tabernacled' amongst men in the Christ, and has from Him been communicated, and is being communicated in such measure as earthly limitations and conditions permit, and that these do point on assuredly to perfect impartation hereafter, when 'we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' The Three could walk in the furnace of fire, because there was One with them, 'like unto the Son of God.' 'Who among us shall dwell with the everlasting fire,' the fire of that divine perfection? They who have had introduction by Christ into the grace, and who will be led by Him into the glory.

Now, brethren, it seems to me to be of great importance that this, the loftiest of conceptions of that future life, should be the main aspect

under which we think of it. It is well to speak of rest from toil; it is well to speak of all the negations of present unfavourable, afflictive conditions which that future presents to us. And perhaps there is none of the aspects of it which appeals to deeper feelings in ourselves, than those which say 'there shall be no night there,' 'there shall be no tears there, neither sorrow nor sighing'; 'there shall be no toil there.' But we must rise above all that, for our heaven is to live in God, and to be possessors of His glory. Do not let us dwell upon the symbols instead of the realities. Do not let us dwell only on the oppositions and contradictions to earth. Let us rather rise high above symbols, high above negations, to the positive truth, and not contented with saying 'We shall be full of blessedness; we shall be full of purity; we shall be full of knowledge,' let us rather think of that which embraces them all—we shall be full of God.

So much, then, for the one object of Christian hope. We have here—

II. The double source of that hope.

Observe that the first clause of my text comes as the last term in a sequence. It began with 'being justified by faith.' The second round of the ladder was, 'we have peace with God.' The third, 'we have access into this grace.' The fourth, 'we stand,' and then comes, 'we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' That is to say, to put it

into general words, and, of course, presupposing the revelation in Jesus Christ as the basis of all, without which there is no assured hope of a future beyond the grave, then the facts of a Christian man's life are for him the best brighteners of the hope beyond. Of course, that is so. ‘Justified by faith’—‘peace with God’—‘access into grace’; what, in the name of common-sense, can death do with these things? How can its blunted sword cut the bond that unites a soul that has had such experiences as these with the source of them all? Nothing can be more grotesque, nothing more incongruous, than to think that that subordinate and accidental fact, whose region is the physical, has anything whatever to do with this higher region of consciousness.

And, further than that, it is absolutely unthinkable to a man in the possession of these spiritual gifts, that they should ever come to a close; and the fact that in the precise degree in which we realise as our very own possession, here and now, these Christian emotions and blessings, we instinctively rise to the belief that they are ‘not for an age, but for all time,’ and not for all time, but for eternity, is itself, if not a proof, yet a very strong presumption, if you believe in God, that a man who thus ‘feels he was not made to die’ because he has grasped the Eternal, is right in so feeling. If, too, we look at the experiences themselves, they all have the stamp of incompleteness, and suggest completeness by their own incompleteness. The

new moon with its ragged edge not more surely prophesies its completed silver round, than do the experiences of the Christian life here, in their greatness and in their smallness, declare that there come a time and an order of things in which what was thwarted tendency shall be accomplished result. The tender green spikelet, pushing up through the brown clods, does not more surely prophesy the waving yellow ear, nor the broad highway on which a man comes in the wilderness more surely declare that there is a village at the end of it, than do the facts of the Christian life, here and now, attest the validity of the hope of the glory of God.

And so, brethren, if you wish to brighten that great light that fills the future, see to it that your present Christianity is fuller of 'peace with God,' 'access into grace,' and the firm, erect standing which flows from these. When the springs in the mountains dry up, the river in the valley shrinks; and when they are full, it glides along level with the top of its banks. So when our Christian life in the present is richest, our Christian hope of the future will be the brighter. Look into yourselves. Is there anything there that witnesses to that great future; anything there that is obviously incipient, and destined to greater power; anything there which is like a tropical plant up here in 45 degrees of north latitude, managing to grow, but with dwarfed leaves and scanty flowers and half shrivelled and sourish fruit, and that in the cold dreams of the warm native land? Reflecting telescopes show

the stars in a mirror, and the observer looks down to see the heavens. Look into yourselves, and see whether, on the polished plate within, there are any images of the stars that move around the Throne of God.

But let us turn for a moment to the second source to which the Apostle traces the Christian hope here. I must not be tempted to more than just a word of explanation, but perhaps you will tolerate that. Paul says that trouble works patience, that is to say, not only passive endurance, but brave persistence in a course, in spite of antagonisms. That is what trouble does to a man when it is rightly borne. Of course the Apostle is speaking here of its ideal operation, and not of the reality which alas! often is seen when our tribulations lash us into impatience, or paralyse our efforts. Tribulation worketh patience, 'and patience *experience*.' That is a difficult word to put into English. There underlies it the frequent thought which is familiar in Scripture, of trouble of all kinds as testing a man, whether as the refiner's fire or the winnower's fan. It tests a man, and if he bears the trouble with patient persistence, then he has passed the test and is approved. Patient perseverance thus works approval, or proof of the man's Christianity, and, still more, proof of the reality and power of the Christ whom his Christianity grasps. And so from out of that approval or proof which comes, through perseverance, from tribulation, there rises, of course, in that heart that has been tested and

has stood, a calm hope that the future will be as the past, and that, having fought through six troubles, by God's help the seventh will be vanquished also, till at last troubles will end, and heaven be won.

Brethren, there is the true point of view from which to look, not only at tribulations, but at all the trials, for they too bring trials, that lie in duty and in enjoyment, and in earthly things. They are meant to work in us a conviction, by our experience of having been able to meet them aright, of the reality of our grasp of God, and of the reality and power of the God whom we grasp. If we took that point of view in regard to all the changes of this changeful life, we should not so often be bewildered and upset by the darkest of our sorrows. The shining lancets and cruel cutting instruments that the surgeon lays out on his table before he begins the operation are very dreadful. But the way to think of them is that they are there in order to remove from a man what it does him harm to keep, and what, if it is not taken away, will kill him. So life, with its troubles, great and small, is all meant for this, to make us surer of, and bring us closer to, our God, and to brace and strengthen us in our own personal character. And if it does that, then blessed be everything that produces these results, and leads us thereby to glorying in the troubles by which shines out on us a brighter hope.

So there are the two sources, you see: the one

is the blessedness of the Christian life, the other the sorrows of the outward life, and both may converge upon the brightening of our Christian hope. Our rainbow is the child of the marriage of the sun and the rain. The Christian hope comes from being 'justified by faith, having peace with God ... and access into grace,' and it comes from tribulation, which 'worketh patience,' and patience which 'worketh approval.' The one spark is struck from the hard flint by the cold steel, and the other is kindled by the sun itself, but they are both fire.

And so, lastly, we have here—

III. The one emotion with which the Christian should front all the facts, inward and outward, of his earthly life.

'We glory in the hope,' 'we glory in tribulation,' I need not dwell upon the lesson which is taught us here by the fact that the Apostle puts as one in a series of Christian characteristics this of a steadfast and all-embracing joy. I do not believe that we Christian people half enough realise how imperative a Christian duty, as well as how great a Christian privilege, it is to be glad always. You have no right to be anxious; you are wrong to be hypochondriac and depressed, and weary and melancholy. True; there are a great many occasions in our Christian life which minister sadness. True; the Christian joy looks very gloomy to a worldly eye. But there are far more

occasions which, if we were right, would make joy instinctive, and which, whether we are right or not, make it obligatory upon us. I need not speak of how, if that hope were brighter than it commonly is with us, and if it were more constantly present to our minds and hearts, we should sing with gladness. I need not dwell upon that great and wonderful paradox by which the co-existence of sorrow and of joy is possible. The sorrows are on the surface; beneath there may be rest. All the winds of heaven may rave across the breast of ocean, and fret it into clouds of spume against a storm-swept sky. But deep down there is stillness, and yet not stagnation, because there is the great motion that brings life and freshness; and so, though there will be wind-vexed surfaces on our too-often agitated spirits, there ought to be deeper than these the calm setting of the whole ocean of our nature towards God Himself. It is possible, as this Apostle has it, to be 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.' It is possible, as his brother Apostle has it, to 'rejoice greatly, though now for a season we are in sorrow through manifold temptations.' Look back upon your lives from the point of view that your tribulation is an instrument to produce hope, and you will be able to thank God for all the way by which He has led you.

Now, brethren, the plain lesson of all this is just that we have here, in these texts, a linked chain, one end of which is wrapped around our sinful hearts, and the other is fastened to the

Throne of God. You cannot drop any of the links, and you must begin at the beginning, if you are to be carried on to the end. If we are to have a joy immovable, we must have a ‘steadfast hope.’ If we are to have a ‘steadfast hope,’ we must have a present ‘grace.’ If we are to have a present ‘grace,’ and ‘access’ to the fullness of God, we must have ‘peace with God.’ If we are to have ‘peace with God,’ we must have the condemnation and the guilt taken away. If we are to have the condemnation and the guilt taken away, Jesus Christ must take them. If Jesus Christ is to take them away, we must have faith in Him. Then you can work it backward, and begin at your own end, and say, ‘If I have faith in Jesus Christ, then every link of the chain in due succession will pass through my hand, and I shall have justifying, peace, access, the grace, erectness, hope, and exultation, and at last He will lead me by the hand into the glory for which I dare to hope, the glory which the Father gave to Him before the foundation of the world, and which He will give to me when the world has passed away in fervent heat.’

A THREEFOLD CORD

‘And hope maketh not ashamed;
because the love of God is shed
abroad in our hearts by the Holy
Ghost which is given unto us.’—

ROMANS v. 5.

We have seen in former sermons that, in the previous context, the Apostle traces Christian hope to two sources: one, the series of experiences which follow ‘being justified by faith’ and the other, those which follow on trouble rightly borne. Those two golden chains together hold up the precious jewel of hope. But a chain that is to bear a weight must have a staple, or it will fall to the ground. And so Paul here turns to yet another thought, and, going behind both our inward experiences and our outward discipline, falls back on that which precedes all. After all is said and done, the love of God, eternal, self-originated, the source of all Christian experiences because of the work of Christ which originates them all, is the root fact of the universe, and the guarantee that our highest anticipations and desires are not unsubstantial visions, but morning dreams, which are proverbially sure to be fulfilled. God is love; therefore the man who trusts Him shall not be put to shame.

But you will notice that here the Apostle not only adduces the love of God as the staple, so to speak, from which these golden chains hang, but that he traces the heart's being suffused with that love to its source, and as, of course, is always the case in the order of analysis, that which was last in time comes first in statement. We begin at the surface, and go down and down and down from effect to cause, and yet again to

the cause of that cause which is itself effect. We strip off, as it were, layer after layer, until we get to the living centre—hope comes from the love, the love comes from the Spirit in the heart. And so to get at the order of time and of manifestation, we must reverse the order of analysis in my text, and begin where it ends. So we have here three things—the Spirit given, the love shed abroad by that Spirit, and the hope established by that love. Now just look at them for a moment.

I. The Spirit given.

Now, the first point to notice here is that the Revised Version presents the meaning of our text more accurately than the Authorised Version, because, instead of reading ‘is given,’ it correctly reads ‘was given.’ And any of you that can consult the original will see that the form of the language implies that the Apostle is thinking, not so much of a continuous bestowment, as of a definite moment when this great gift was bestowed upon the man to whom he is speaking.

So the first question is, when was that Spirit given to these Roman Christians? The Christian Church has been split in two by its answers to that question. One influential part, which has taken a new lease of life amongst us to-day, says ‘in baptism,’ and the other says ‘at the moment of faith.’ I am not going to be tempted into controversial paths now, for my purpose is a very different one, but I cannot help just a word

about the former of these two answers. ‘Given in baptism,’ say our friends, and I venture to think that they thereby degrade Christianity into a system of magic, bringing together two entirely disparate things, an external physical act and a spiritual change. I do not say anything about the disastrous effects that have followed from such a conception of the medium by which this greatest of all Christian gifts is effected upon men. Since the Spirit who is given is life, the result of the gift of that Spirit is a new life, and we all know what disastrous and debasing consequences have followed from that dogma of regeneration by baptism. No doubt it is perfectly true that normally, in the early Church, the Divine Spirit was given at baptism; but for one thing, that general rule had exceptions, as in the case of Cornelius, and, for another thing, though it was given *at* baptism, it was not given *in* baptism, but it was given through faith, of which in those days baptism was the sequel and the sign.

But I pass altogether from this, and fall back on the great words which, to me at least, if there were no other, would determine the whole answer to this question as to when the Spirit was given: ‘This spake He of the Holy Ghost, which they that *believe* on Him should receive’; and I would ask the modern upholders of the other theory the indignant question which the Apostle Paul fired off out of his heavy artillery at their ancient analogues, the circumcisers in the Galatian Church: ‘This only would I know of you: Received ye the Holy Spirit by the works of

the law, or by the hearing of faith?'

The answer which the evangelical Christian gives to this ancient question suggested by my text, 'When was that Divine Spirit bestowed?' is congruous with the spirituality of the Christian faith, and is eminently reasonable. For the condition required is the opening of the whole nature in willing welcome to the entrance of the Divine Spirit, and as surely as, wherever there is an indentation of the land, and a concavity of a receptive bay, the ocean will pour into it and fill it, so surely where a heart is open for God, God in His Divine Spirit will enter into that heart, and there will shed His blessed influences.

So, dear brethren, and this is the main point to which I wish to direct your attention, the Apostle here takes it for granted that all these Roman Christians knew in themselves the truth of what he was saying, and had an experience which confirmed his assertion that the Divine Spirit of God was given to them when they believed. Ah! I wonder if that is true about us professing Christians; if we are aware in any measure of a higher life than our own having been breathed into us; if we are aware in any measure of a Divine Spirit dwelling in our spirits, moulding, lifting, enlightening, guiding, constraining, and yet not coercing? We ought to be, 'Know ye not that the Spirit dwelleth in you, except ye be rejected?' Brethren, it seems to me to be of the very last importance, in this period of the Church's history, that the proportion

between the Church's teaching as to the work of Christ on the Cross, and as to the consequent work of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts and spirits, should be changed. We must become more mystical if we are not to become less Christian. And the fact that so many of us seem to imagine that the whole Gospel lies in this, that 'He died for our sins according to the Scriptures,' and have relegated the teaching that He, by His Spirit, lives in us, if we are His disciples, to a less prominent place, has done enormous harm, not only to the type of Christian life, but to the conception of what Christianity is, both amongst those who receive it, and amongst those who do not accept it, making it out to be nothing more than a means of escape from the consequences of our transgression, instead of recognising it for what it is, the impartation of a new life which will flower into all beauty, and bear fruit in all goodness.

There was a question put once to a group of disciples, in astonishment and incredulity, by this Apostle, when he said to the twelve disciples in Ephesus, 'Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?' The question might well be put to a multitude of professing Christians amongst us, and I am afraid a great many of them, if they answered truly, would answer as those disciples did, 'We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.'

And now for the second point in my text—

II. The love which is shed abroad by that Spirit.

Now, I suppose I do not need to do more than point out that ‘the love of God’ here means His to us, and not ours to Him, and that the metaphor employed is but partially represented by that rendering ‘shed abroad.’ ‘Poured out’ would better convey Paul's image, which is that of a flood sent coursing through the heart, or, perhaps, rather lying there, as a calm deep lake on whose unruffled surface the heavens, with all their stars, are reflected. Of course, if God's love to us thus suffuses a heart, then there follows the consciousness of that love; though it is not the consciousness of the love that the Apostle is primarily speaking of, but that which lies behind it, the actual flowing into the human heart of that sweet and all-satisfying Love. This Divine Spirit that dwells in us, if we are trusting in Christ, will pour it in full streams into our else empty hearts. Surely there is nothing incongruous with the nature either of God or of man, in believing that thus a real communication is possible between them, and that by thoughts the occasions of which we cannot trace, by moments of elevation, by swift, piercing convictions, by sudden clear illuminations, God may speak, and will speak, in our waiting hearts.

'Such rebounds the inmost ear
  Catches often from afar.
Listen, prize them, hold them dear;

For of God, of God, they are.'

But we must not forget, too, that, according to the whole strain of New Testament thinking, the means by which that Divine Spirit does pour out the flashing flood of the love of God into a man's heart is, as Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, by taking the things of Christ and showing them to us.

Now, as I said about a former point of my sermon, that the Apostle was taking for granted that this gift of the Spirit belonged to all Christian people; so here again he takes for granted that in every Christian heart there is, by a divine operation, the presence of the love, and of the consciousness of the love, of God. And, again, the question comes to some of us stunningly, to all of us warningly, Is that a transcript of our experience? It is the ideal of a Christian life; it is meant that it should be so, and should be so continuously. The stream that is poured out is intended to run summer and winter, not to be dried up in drought, nor made turbid and noisy in flood, but with equable flow throughout. I fear me that the experience of most good people is rather like one of those tropical wadies, or nullahs in Eastern lands, where there alternate times of spate and times of drought; and instead of a flashing stream, pouring life everywhere, and full to the top of its banks, there is for long periods a dismal stretch of white sun-baked stones, and a chaos of tumbled rocks with not a drop of water in the

channel. The Spirit pours God's love into men's spirits, but there may be dams and barriers, so that no drop of the water comes into the empty heart.

Our Quaker friends have a great deal to say about ‘waiting for the springing of the life within us.’ Never mind about the phraseology: what is meant is profoundly true, that no Christian man will realise this blessing unless he knows how to sit still and meditate, and let the gracious influence soak into him. Thus being quiet, he may, he will, find rising in his heart the consciousness of the love of God. You will not, if you give only broken momentary sidelong glances; you will not, if you do not lie still. If you hold up a cup in a shaking hand beneath a fountain, and often twitch it aside, you will get little water in it; and unless we ‘wait on the Lord,’ we shall not ‘renew our strength.’ You can build a dam as they do in Holland that will keep out, not only the waters of a river, but the waters of an ocean, and not a drop will come through the dike. Brethren, we must keep ourselves in the love of God.

Lastly, we have here—

III. The hope that is established by the love poured out.

I need not dwell at any length upon this point, because, to a large extent, it has been anticipated in former sermons, but just a word or two may be permitted me. That love, you

may be very sure, is not going to lose its objects in the dust. The old Psalmist who knew so much less than we do as to the love of God, and knew nothing of the whispers of a Divine Spirit within his heart charged with the message of the love as it was manifested in Jesus Christ, had risen to a height of confidence, the beauty of the expression of which is often lost sight of, because we insist upon dealing with it as merely being a Messianic prophecy, which it is, but not merely: 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy beloved' (for that is the real meaning of the word translated 'thy Holy One')—'Thou wilt not suffer the child of Thy love to see corruption.' Death's bony fingers can untie all true lover's knots but one; and they fumble at that one in vain. God will not lose His child in the grave.

That love, we may be very sure, will not foster in us hopes that are to be disappointed. Now, it is a fact that the more a man feels that God loves him, the less is it possible for him to believe that that love will ever terminate, or that he shall 'all die.' In the lock of a canal, as the water pours in, the vessel rises. In our hearts, as the flood of the full love of God pours in, our hopes are borne up and up, nearer and nearer to the heavens. Since it is so, we must find in the fact that the constant and necessary result of communion with Him here on earth is a conviction of the immortality of that communion, a very, very strong guarantee for ourselves that the hope is not in vain. And if you say that that is all merely

subjective, yet I think that the universality of the experience is a fact to be taken into account even by those who doubt the reality of the hope, and for ourselves, at all events, is a sufficient ground on which to rest. We have the historical fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have the fact that wherever there has been earthly experience of true communion with God, there, and in the measure in which it has been realised, the thermometer of our hopes of immortality, so to speak, has risen. 'God is love,' and God will not bring the man that trusts Him to confusion.

And may we not venture to say that, contemplating the analogous earthly love, we are permitted to believe that that divine Lover of our souls desires to have His beloved with Him, and desires that there be no separation between Him and them, either, if I might so say, in place or in disposition? As certainly as husband and wife, lover and friend, long to be together, and need it for perfection and for rest, so surely will that divine love not be satisfied until it has gathered all its children to its breast and made them partakers of itself.

There are many, many hopes that put the men who cherish them to shame, partly because they are never fulfilled, partly because, though fulfilled, they are disappointed, since the reality is so much less than the anticipation. Who does not know that the spray of blossom on the tree looks far more lovely hanging above our heads than when it is grasped by us? Who does not

know that the fish struggling on the hook seems heavier than it turns out to be when lying on the bank? We go to the rainbow's end, and we find, not a pot of gold, but a huddle of cold, wet mist. There is one man that is entitled to say: 'To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.' Who is he? Only the man whose hope is in the Lord his God. If we open our hearts by faith, then these three lines of sequence of which we have been speaking will converge, and we shall have the hope that is the shining apex of 'being justified by faith,' and the hope that is the calm result of trouble and agitation, and the hope that, travelling further and higher than anything in our inward experience or our outward discipline, grasps the key-word of the universe, 'God is love,' and triumphantly makes sure that 'neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

WHAT PROVES GOD'S LOVE

> 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'—ROMANS v. 8.

We have seen in previous sermons on the

preceding context that the Apostle has been tracing various lines of sequence, all of which converge upon Christian hope. The last of these pointed to the fact that the love of God, poured into a heart like oil into a lamp, brightened that flame; and having thus mentioned the great Christian revelation of God as love, Paul at once passes to emphasise the historical fact on which the conviction of that love rests, and goes on to say that 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us, *for* when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' Then there rises before him the thought of how transcendent and unparalleled a love is that which pours its whole preciousness on unworthy and unresponsive hearts. He thinks to himself —'We are all ungodly; without strength—yet, He died for us. Would any man do that? No! for,' says he, 'it will be a hard thing to find any one ready to die for a righteous man—a man rigidly just and upright, and because rigidly just, a trifle hard, and therefore not likely to touch a heart to sacrifice; and even for a good man, in whom austere righteousness has been softened and made attractive, and become graciousness and beneficence, well! it is just within the limits of possibility that somebody might be found even to die for a man that had laid such a strong hand upon his affections. But God commendeth His love in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.' Now, when Paul says 'commend,' he uses a very significant word which is employed

in two ways in the New Testament. It sometimes means to establish, or to prove, or to make certain. But ‘prove’ is a cold word, and the expression also means to recommend, to set forth in such a way as to appeal to the heart, and God does both in that great act. He establishes the fact, and He, as it were, sweeps it into a man's heart, on the bosom of that full tide of self-sacrifice.

So there are two or three points that arise from these words, on which I desire to dwell now—to lay them upon our hearts, and not only upon our understandings. For it is a poor thing to prove the love of God, and we need that not only shall we be sure of it, but that we shall be softened by it. So now let me ask you to look with me, first, at this question—

I. What Paul thought Jesus Christ died for.

‘Died *for* us.’ Now that expression plainly implies two things: first, that Christ died of His own accord, and being impelled by a great motive, beneficence; and, second, that that voluntary death, somehow or other, is for our behoof and advantage. The word in the original, ‘for,’ does not define in what way that death ministers to our advantage, but it does assert that for those Roman Christians who had never seen Jesus Christ, and by consequence for you and me nineteen centuries off the Cross, there is benefit in the fact of that death. Now, suppose we quote an incident in the story of missionary

martyrdom. There was a young lady, whom some of us knew and loved, in a Chinese mission station, who, with the rest of the missionary band, was flying. Her life was safe. She looked back, and saw a Chinese boy that her heart twined round, in danger. She returned to save him; they laid hold of her and flung her into the burning house, and her charred remains have never been found. That was a death for another, but 'Jesus died for us' in a deeper sense than that. Take another case. A man sets himself to some great cause, not his own, and he sees that in order to bless humanity, either by the proclamation of some truth, or by the origination of some great movement, or in some other way, if he is to carry out his purpose, he must give his life. He does so, and dies a martyr. What he aimed at could only be done by the sacrifice of his life. The death was a means to his end, and he died for his fellows. That is not the depth of the sense in which Paul meant that Jesus Christ died for us. It was not that He was true to His message, and, like many another martyr, died. There is only one way, as it seems to me, in which any beneficial relation can be established between the Death of Christ and us, and it is that when He died He died for us, because 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree.'

Dear brethren, I dare say some of you do not take that view, but I know not how justice can be done to the plain words of Scripture unless this is the point of view from which we look at

the Cross of Calvary—that there the Lamb of Sacrifice was bearing, and bearing away, the sins of the whole world. I know that Christian men who unite in the belief that Christ's death was a sacrifice and an atonement diverge from one another in their interpretations of the way in which that came to be a fact, and I believe, for my part, that the divergent interpretations are like the divergent beams of light that fall upon men who stand round the same great luminary, and that all of them take their origin in, and are part of the manifestation of, the one transcendent fact, which passes all understanding, and gathers into itself all the diverse conceptions of it which are formed by limited minds. He died for us because, in His death, our sins are taken away and we are restored to the divine favour.

I know that Jesus Christ is said to have made far less of that aspect of His work in the Gospels than His disciples have done in the Epistles, and that we are told that, if we go back to Jesus, we shall not find the doctrine which for some of us is the first form in which the Gospel finds its way into the hearts of men. I admit that the fully-developed teaching followed the fact, as was necessarily the case. I do not admit that Jesus Christ ‘spake nothing concerning Himself’ as the sacrifice for the world's sins. For I hear from His lips—not to dwell upon other sayings which I could quote—I hear from His lips, ‘The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister’—that is only half His purpose—‘and

to give His life a ransom instead of the many.' You cannot strike the atoning aspect of His death out of that expression by any fair handling of the words.

And what does the Lord's Supper mean? Why did Jesus Christ select that one point of His life as the point to be remembered? Why did He institute the double memorial, the body parted from the blood being a sign of a violent death? I know of no explanation that makes that Lord's Supper an intelligible rite except the explanation which says that He came, to live indeed, and in that life to be a sacrifice, but to make the sacrifice complete by Himself bearing the consequences of transgression, and making atonement for the sins of the world.

Brethren, that is the only aspect of Christ's death which makes it of any consequence to us. Strip it of that, and what does it matter to me that He died, any more than it matters to me that any philanthropist, any great teacher, any hero or martyr or saint, should have died? As it seems to me, nothing. Christ's death is surrounded by tenderly pathetic and beautiful accompaniments. As a story it moves the hearts of men, and 'purges them, by pity and by terror.' But the death of many a hero of tragedy does all that. And if you want to have the Cross of Christ held upright in its place as the Throne of Christ and the attractive power for the whole world, you must not tamper with that great truth, but say, 'He died for our sins, according to the

Scriptures.'

Now, there is a second question that I wish to ask, and that is—

II. How does Christ's death 'commend' God's love?

That is a strange expression, if you will think about it, that '*God* commendeth His love towards us in that *Christ* died.' If you take the interpretation of Christ's death of which I have already been speaking, one could have understood the Apostle if he had said, 'Christ commendeth His love towards us in that Christ died.' But where is the force of the fact of a *man's* death to prove *God's* love? Do you not see that underlying that swift sentence of the Apostle there is a presupposition, which he takes for granted? It is so obvious that I do not need to dwell upon it to vindicate his change of persons, viz. that 'God was in Christ,' in such fashion as that whatsoever Christ did was the revelation of God. You cannot suppose, at least I cannot see how you can, that there is any force of proof in the words of my text, unless you come up to the full belief, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.'

Suppose some great martyr who dies for his fellows. Well, all honour to him, and the race will come to his tomb for a while, and bring their wreaths and their sorrow. But what bearing has his death upon our knowledge of God's love towards us? None whatever, or at most a very

indirect and shadowy one. We have to dig deeper down than that. ‘God commends His love ... in that Christ died.’ ‘He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.’ And we have the right and the obligation to argue back from all that is manifest in the tender Christ to the heart of God, and say, not only, ‘God so loved the world that He’ sent His Son, but to see that the love that was in Christ is the manifestation of the love of God Himself.

So there stands the Cross, the revelation to us, not only of a Brother's sacrifice, but of a Father's love; and that because Jesus Christ is the revelation of God as being the ‘eradiation of His glory, and the express image of His person.’ Friends! light does pour out from that Cross, whatever view men take of it. But the omnipotent beam, the all-illuminating radiance, the transforming light, the heat that melts, are all dependent on our looking at it—I do not only say, as Paul looked at it, nor do I even say as Christ looked at it, but as the deep necessities of humanity require that the world should look at it, as the altar whereon is laid the sacrifice for our sins, the very Son of God Himself. To me the great truths of the Incarnation and the Atonement of Jesus Christ are not points in a mere speculative theology; they are the pulsating vital centre of religion. And every man needs them in his own experience.

I was going to have said a word or two here—but it is not necessary—about the need that the

love of God should be irrefragably established, by some plain and undeniable and conspicuous fact. I need not dwell upon the ambiguous oracles which—

'Nature, red in tooth and claw,
With rapine'

gives forth, nor on how the facts of human life, our own sorrows, and the world's miseries, the tears that swathe the earth, as it rolls on its orbit, like a misty atmosphere, war against the creed that God is love. I need not remind you, either, of how deep, in our own hearts, when the conscience begins to speak its *not* ambiguous oracles, there does rise the conviction that there is much in us which it is impossible should be the object of God's love. Nor need I remind you how all these difficulties in believing in a God who is love, based on the contradictory aspects of nature, and the mysteries of providence, and the whisperings of our own consciousness, are proved to have been insuperable by the history of the world, where we find mythologies and religions of all types and gods of every sort, but nowhere in all the pantheon a God who is Love.

Only let me press upon you that that conviction of the love of God, which is found now far beyond the limits of Christian faith, and amongst many of us who, in the name of that conviction itself, reject Christianity, because of its sterner aspects, is historically the child of the evangelical doctrine of the Incarnation and

sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And if it still subsists, as I know it does, especially in this generation, amongst many men who reject what seems to me to be the very kernel of Christianity—subsists like the stream cut off from its source, but still running, that only shows that men hold many convictions the origin of which they do not know. God is love. You will not permanently sustain that belief against the pressure of outward mysteries and inward sorrows, unless you grasp the other conviction that Christ died for our sins. The two are inseparable.

And now lastly—

III. What kind of love does Christ's death declare to us as existing in God?

A love that is turned away by no sin—that is the thing that strikes the Apostle here, as I have already pointed out. The utmost reach of human affection might be that a man would die for the good—he would scarcely die for the righteous. But God sends His Son, and comes Himself in His Son, and His Son died for the ungodly and the sinner. That death reveals a love which is its own origin and motive. We love because we discern, or fancy we do, something lovable in the object. God loves under the impulse, so to speak, of His own welling-up heart.

And yet it is a love which, though not turned away by any sin, is witnessed by that death to be rigidly righteous. It is no mere flaccid, flabby laxity of a loose-girt affection, no mere foolish

indulgence like that whereby earthly parents spoil their children. God's love is not lazy good-nature, as a great many of us think it to be and so drag it in the mud, but it is rigidly righteous, and therefore Christ died. That Death witnesses that it is a love which shrinks from no sacrifices. This Isaac was not 'spared.' God gave up His Son. Love has its very speech in surrender, and God's love speaks as ours does. It is a love which, turned away by no sin, and yet rigidly righteous and shrinking from no sacrifices, embraces all ages and lands. 'God commendeth'—not 'commended.' The majestic present tense suggests that time and space are nothing to the swift and all-filling rays of that great Light. That love is 'towards us,' you and me and all our fellows. The Death is an historical fact, occurring in one short hour. The Cross is an eternal power, raying out light and love over all humanity and through all ages.

God lays siege to all hearts in that great sacrifice. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for *your* sins 'according to the Scriptures'? Do you see there the assurance of a love which will lift you up above all the cross-currents of earthly life, and the mysteries of providence, into the clear ether where the sunshine is unobscured? And above all, do you fling back the reverberating ray from the mirror of your own heart that directs again towards heaven the beam of love which heaven has shot down upon you? 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the

propitiation for our sins.' Is it true of us that we love God because He first loved us?

THE WARRING QUEENS

> 'As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.'—ROMANS v. 21.

I am afraid this text will sound to some of you rather unpromising. It is full of well-worn terms, 'sin,' 'death,' 'grace,' 'righteousness,' 'eternal life,' which suggest dry theology, if they suggest anything. When they welled up from the Apostle's glowing heart they were like a fiery lava-stream. But the stream has cooled, and, to a good many of us, they seem as barren and sterile as the long ago cast out coils of lava on the sides of a quiescent volcano. They are so well-worn and familiar to our ears that they create but vague conceptions in our minds, and they seem to many of us to be far away from a bearing upon our daily lives. But you much mistake Paul if you take him to be a mere theological writer. He is an earnest evangelist, trying to draw men to love and trust in Jesus Christ. And his writings, however old-fashioned and doctrinally hard they may seem to you, are all throbbing with life—instinct with truths that belong to all ages and places, and which fit close to every one

of us.

I do not know if I can give any kind of freshness to these words, but I wish to try. To begin with, I notice the highly-imaginative and picturesque form into which the Apostle casts his thoughts here. He, as it were, draws back a curtain, and lets us see two royal figures, which are eternally opposed and dividing the dominion between them. Then he shows us the issues to which these two rulers respectively conduct their subjects; and the question that is trembling on his lips is 'Under which of them do you stand?' Surely that is not fossil theology, but truths that are of the highest importance, and ought to be of the deepest interest, to every one of us. They are to you the former, whether they are the latter or not.

I. So, first, look at the two Queens who rule over human life.

Sin and Grace are both personified; and they are both conceived of as female figures, and both as exercising dominion. They stand face to face, and each recognises as her enemy the other. The one has established her dominion: 'Sin *hath* reigned.' The other is fighting to establish hers: 'That Grace *might* reign.' And the struggle is going on between them, not only on the wide field of the world; but in the narrow lists of the heart of each of us.

Sin reigns. The truths that underlie that solemn picture are plain enough, however

unwelcome they may be to some of us, and however remote from the construction of the universe which many of us are disposed to take.

Now, let us understand our terms. Suppose a man commits a theft. You may describe it from three different points of view. He has thereby broken the law of the land; and when we are thinking about that we call it crime. He has also broken the law of 'morality,' as we call it; and when we are looking at his deed from that point of view, we call it vice. Is that all? He has broken something else. He has broken the law of God; and when we look at it from that point of view we call it sin. Now, there are a great many things which are sins that are not crimes; and, with due limitations, I might venture to say that there are some things which are sins that are not to be qualified as vices. Sin implies God. The Psalmist was quite right when he said; 'Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned'; although he was confessing a foul injury he had done to Bathsheba, and a glaring crime that he had committed against Uriah. It was as to God, and in reference to Him only, that his crime and his vice darkened and solidified into sin.

And what is it, in our actions or in ourselves considered in reference to God, that makes our actions sins and ourselves sinners? Remember the prodigal son. 'Father! Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.' There you have it all. He went away, and 'wasted his substance in riotous living.' To claim myself for my own; to

act independently of, or contrary to, the will of God; to try to shake myself clear of Him; to have nothing to do with Him, even though it be by mere forgetfulness and negligence, and, in all my ways to comport myself as if I had no relations of dependence on and submission to him—that is sin. And there may be that oblivion or rebellion, not only in the gross vulgar acts which the law calls crimes, or in those which conscience declares to be vices, but also in many things which, looked at from a lower point of view, may be fair and pure and noble. If there is this assertion of self in them, or oblivion of God and His will in them, I know not how we are to escape the conclusion that even these fall under the class of sins. For there can be no act or thought, truly worthy of a man, situated and circumstanced as we are, which has not, for the very core and animating motive of it, a reference to God.

Now, when I come and say, as my Bible teaches me to say, that this is the deepest view of the state of humanity that sin reigns, I do not wish to fall into the exaggerations by which sometimes that statement has been darkened and discredited; but I do want to press upon you, dear brethren, this, as a matter of *personal* experience, that wherever there is a heart that loves, and leaves God out, and wherever there is a will that resolves, determines, impels to action, and does not bow itself before Him, and wherever there are hands that labour, or feet that run, at tasks and in paths self-chosen and

unconsecrated by reference to our Father in heaven, no matter how great and beautiful subsidiary lustres may light up their deeds, the very heart of them all is transgression of the law of God. For this, and nothing else or less, is His law: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.' I do not charge you with crimes. You know how far it would be right to charge you with vices. *I* do not charge you with anything; but I pray you to come with me and confess: 'We all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.'

I suppose I need not dwell upon the difficulty of getting a lodgment for this conviction in men's hearts. There is no sadder, and no more conclusive proof, of the tremendous power of sin over us, than that it has lulled us into unconsciousness, hard to be broken, of its own presence and existence. You remember the old stories—I suppose there is no truth in them, but they will do for an illustration—about some kind of a blood-sucking animal that perched upon a sleeping man, and with its leathern wings fanned him into deeper drowsiness whilst it drew from him his life-blood. That is what this hideous Queen does for men. She robes herself in a dark cloud, and sends out her behests from obscurity. And men fancy that they are free whilst all the while they are her servants. Oh, dear brethren! you may call this theology, but it is a simple statement of the facts of our condition. 'Sin hath reigned.'

And now turn to the other picture, 'Grace might reign.' Then there is an antagonistic power that rises up to confront the widespread dominion of this anarch of old. And this Queen comes with twenty thousand to war against her that has but ten thousand on her side.

Again I say, let us understand our terms. I suppose, there are few of the keywords of the New Testament which have lost more of their radiance, like quicksilver, by exposure in the air during the centuries than that great word Grace, which is always on the lips of this Apostle, and to him had music in its sound, and which to us is a piece of dead doctrine, associated with certain high Calvinistic theories which we enlightened people have long ago grown beyond, and got rid of. Perhaps Paul was more right than we when his heart leaped up within him at the very thought of all which he saw to lie palpitating and throbbing with eager desire to bless men, in that great word. What does he mean by it? Let me put it into the shortest possible terms. This antagonist Queen is nothing but the love of God raying out for ever to us inferior creatures, who, by reason of our sinfulness, have deserved something widely different. Sin stands there, a hideous hag, though a queen; Grace stands here, 'in all her gestures dignity and love,' fair and self-communicative, though a sovereign. The love of God in exercise to sinful men: that is what the New Testament means by grace. And is it not a great thought?

Notice, for further elucidation of the Apostle's conception, how he sacrifices the verbal correctness of his antithesis in order to get to the real opposition. What is the opposite of Sin? Righteousness. Why does he not say, then, that ‘as Sin hath reigned unto death, even so might Righteousness reign unto life’? Why? Because it is not man, or anything in man, that can be the true antagonist of, and victor over, the regnant Sin of humanity; but God Himself comes into the field, and only He is the foe that Sin dreads. That is to say, the only hope for a sin-tyrannised world is in the out-throb of the love of the great heart of God. For, notice the weapon with which He fights man's transgression, if I may vary the figure for a moment. It is only subordinately punishment, or law, or threatening, or the revelation of the wickedness of the transgression. All these have their places, but they are secondary places. The thing that will conquer a world's wickedness is nothing else but the manifested love of God. Only the patient shining down of the sun will ever melt the icebergs that float in all our hearts. And wonderful and blessed it is to think that, in whatsoever aspects man's sin may have been an interruption and a contradiction of the divine purpose, out of the evil has come a good; that the more obdurate and universal the rebellion, the more has it evoked a deeper and more wondrous tenderness. The blacker the thundercloud, the brighter glows the rainbow that is flung across it. So these two front each

other, the one settled in her established throne—

'Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell—'

the other coming on her adventurous errand to conquer the world to herself, and to banish the foul tyranny under which men groan. ‘Sin hath reigned.’ Grace is on her way to her dominion.

II. Notice the gifts of these two Queens to their subjects.

‘Sin hath reigned in death’ (as the accurate translation has it); ‘Grace reigns unto eternal life.’ The one has established her dominion, and its results are wrought out, her reign is, as it were, a reign in a cemetery; and her subjects are dead. If you want a modern instance to illustrate an ancient saw, think of Armenia. There is a reign whose gifts to its subjects are death. Sin reigns, says Paul, and for proof points to the fact that men die.

Now, I am not going to enter into the question here, and now, whether physical death passes over mankind because of the fact of transgression. I do not suppose that this is so. But I ask you to remember that when the Bible says that ‘Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned,’ it does not merely mean the physical fact of dissolution, but it means that fact along with the accompaniments of it, and the forerunners of it, in men's consciences. ‘The sting of death is sin,’ says Paul, in another place. By which he implies, I presume, that, if it were

not for the fact of alienation from God and opposition to His holy will, men might lie down and die as placidly as an animal does, and might strip themselves for it ‘as for a bed, that longing they'd been sick for.’ No doubt, there was death in the world long before there were men in it. No doubt, also, the complex whole phenomenon gets its terror from the fact of men's sin.

But it is not so much that physical fact with its accompaniments which Paul is thinking about when he says that ‘sin reigns in death,’ as it is that solemn truth which he is always reiterating, and which I pray you, dear friends, to lay to heart, that, whatever activity there may be in the life of a man who has rent himself away from dependence upon God—however vigorous his brain, however active his hand, however full charged with other interests his life, in the very depth of it is a living death, and the right name for it is death. So this is Sin's gift—that over our whole nature there come mortality and decay, and that they who live as her subjects are dead whilst they live. Dear brethren, that may be figurative, but it seems to me that it is absurd for you to turn away from such thoughts, shrug your shoulders, and say, ‘Old-fashioned Calvinistic theology!’ It is simply putting into a vivid form the facts of your life and of your condition in relation to God, if you are subjects of Sin.

Then, on the other hand, the other queenly figure has her hands filled with one great gift

which, like the fatal bestowment which Sin gives to her subjects, has two aspects, a present and a future one. Life, which is given in our redemption from Death and Sin, and in union with God; that is the present gift that the love of God holds out to every one of us. That life, in its very incompleteness here, carries in itself the prophecy of its own completion hereafter, in a higher form and world, just as truly as the bud is the prophet of the flower and of the fruit; just as truly as a half-reared building is the prophecy of its own completion when the roof tree is put upon it. The men that here have, as we all may have if we choose, the gift of life eternal in the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ His Son, must necessarily tend onwards and upwards to a region where Death is beneath the horizon, and Life flows and flushes the whole heaven. Brother! do you put out your whole hand to take the poisoned gift from the claw-like hand of that hideous Queen; or do you turn and take the gift of life eternal from the hands of the queenly Grace?

III. How this queenly Grace gives her gifts.

You observe that the Apostle, as is his wont—I was going to say—gets himself entangled in a couple of almost parenthetical or, at all events, subsidiary sentences. I suppose when he began to write he meant to say, simply, ‘as Sin hath reigned unto death, so Grace might reign unto life.’ But notice that he inserts two qualifications: ‘through righteousness,’ ‘through

Jesus Christ our Lord.' What does he mean by these?

He means this, first, that even that great love of God, coming throbbing straight from His heart, cannot give eternal life as a mere matter of arbitrary will. God can make His sun to shine and His rain to fall, 'on the unthankful and on the evil,' and if God could, God would give eternal life to everybody, bad and good; but He cannot. There must be righteousness if there is to be life. Just as sin's fruit is death, the fruit of righteousness is life.

He means, in the next place, that whilst there is no life without righteousness, there is no righteousness without God's gift. You cannot break away from the dominion of Sin, and, as it were, establish yourselves in a little fortress of your own, repelling her assaults by any power of yours. Dear brethren, we cannot undo the past; we cannot strip off the poisoned garment that clings to our limbs; we can mend ourselves in many respects, but we cannot of our own volition and motion clothe ourselves with that righteousness of which the wearers shall be worthy to 'pass through the gate into the city.' There is no righteousness without God's gift.

And the other subsidiary clause completes the thought: 'through Christ.' In Him is all the grace, the manifest love, of God gathered together. It is not diffused as the nebulous light in some chaotic incipient system, but it is gathered into a

sun that is set in the centre, in order that it may pour down warmth and life upon its circling planets. The grace of God is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him is life eternal; therefore, if we desire to possess it we must possess Him. In Him is righteousness; therefore, if we desire our own foulness to be changed into the holiness which shall see God, we must go to Jesus Christ. Grace reigns in life, but it is life through righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ our Lord.

So, then, brother, my message and my petition to each of you are—knit yourself to Him by faith in Him. Then He who is 'full of grace and truth' will come to you; and, coming, will bring in His hands righteousness and life eternal. If only we rest ourselves on Him, and keep ourselves close in touch with Him; then we shall be delivered from the tyranny of the darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love.

‘THE FORM OF TEACHING’

> ‘... Ye have obeyed from the heart
> that form of doctrine which was
> delivered you.’—ROMANS vi. 17.

There is room for difference of opinion as to what Paul precisely means by ‘form’ here. The word so rendered appears in English as *type*, and has a similar variety of meaning. It signifies originally a mark made by pressure or impact; and then, by natural transitions, a *mould*, or more generally a *pattern* or *example*, and then the copy of such an example or pattern, or the cast from such a mould. It has also the other meaning which its English equivalent has taken on very extensively of late years, such as, for instance, you find in expressions like ‘An English type of face,’ meaning thereby the general outline which preserves the distinguishing characteristics of a thing. Now we may choose between these two meanings in our text. If the Apostle means type in the latter sense of the word, then the rendering ‘form’ is adequate, and he is thinking of the Christian teaching which had been given to the Roman Christians as possessing certain well-defined characteristics which distinguished it from other kinds of teaching—such, for instance, as Jewish or heathen.

But if we take the other meaning, then he is, in true Pauline fashion, bringing in a vivid and picturesque metaphor to enforce his thought, and is thinking of the teaching which the Roman Christians had received as being a kind of mould into which they were thrown, a pattern to which they were to be conformed. And that that is his meaning seems to me to be made a little more probable by the fact that the last words of my text would be more accurate if inverted, and instead of reading, as the Authorised Version does, ‘that form of doctrine which was delivered you,’ we were to read, as the Revised Version does, ‘that form whereunto ye were delivered.’

If this be the general meaning of the words before us, there are three thoughts arising from them to which I turn briefly. First, Paul's Gospel was a definite body of teaching; secondly, that teaching is a mould for conduct and character; lastly, that teaching therefore demands obedience. Take, then, these three thoughts.

I. First, Paul's Gospel was a definite body of teaching.

Now the word ‘doctrine,’ which is employed in my text, has, in the lapse of years since the Authorised Version was made, narrowed its significance. At the date of our Authorised translation ‘doctrine’ was probably equivalent to ‘teaching,’ of whatever sort it might be. Since then it has become equivalent to a statement of abstract principles, and that is not at all what

Paul means. He does not mean to say that his gospel was a form of doctrine in the sense of being a theological system, but he means to say that it was a body of teaching, the nature of the teaching not being defined at all by the word.

Therefore we have to notice that the great, blessed peculiarity of the Gospel is that it is a teaching, not of abstract dry principles, but of concrete historical facts. From these principles in plenty may be gathered, but in its first form as it comes to men fresh from God it is not a set of propositions, but a history of deeds that were done upon earth. And, therefore, is it fitted to be the food of every soul and the mould of every character.

Jesus Christ did not come and talk to men about God, and say to them what His Apostles afterwards said, 'God is love,' but He lived and died, and that mainly was His teaching about God. He did not come to men and lay down a theory of atonement or a doctrine of propitiation, or theology about sin and its relations to God, but He went to the Cross and gave Himself for us, and that was His teaching about sacrifice. He did not say to men 'There is a future life, and it is of such and such a sort,' but He came out of the grave and He said 'Touch Me, and handle Me. A spirit hath not flesh and bones,' and *therefore* He brought life and immortality to light, by no empty words but by the solid realities of facts. He did not lecture upon ethics, but He lived a perfect human life

out of which all moral principles that will guide human conduct may be gathered. And so, instead of presenting us with a *hortus siccus*, with a botanic collection of scientifically arranged and dead propositions, He led us into the meadow where the flowers grow, living and fair. His life and death, with all that they imply, are the teaching.

Let us not forget, on the other hand, that the history of a fact is not the mere statement of the outward thing that has happened. Suppose four people, for instance, standing at the foot of Christ's Cross; four other 'evangelists' than the four that we know. There is a Roman soldier; there is a Pharisee; there is one of the weeping crowd of poor women, not disciples; and there is a disciple. The first man tells the fact as he saw it: 'A Jewish rebel was crucified this morning.' The second man tells the fact: 'A blaspheming apostate suffered what he deserved to-day.' The woman tells the fact: 'A poor, gentle, fair soul was martyred to-day.' And the fourth one tells the fact: 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins.' The three tell the same fact; the fourth preaches the Gospel—that is to say, Christian teaching is the facts plus their explanation; and it is that which differentiates it from the mere record which is of no avail to anybody. So Paul himself in one of his other letters puts it. This is his gospel: Jesus of Nazareth 'died for *our* sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.' That is what turns the bald story of

the facts into teaching, which is the mould for life.

So on the one hand, dear brethren, do not let us fall into the superficial error of fancying that our religion is a religion of emotion and morality only. It is a religion with a basis of divine truth, which, being struck away, all the rest goes. There is a revolt against dogma to-day, a revolt which in large measure is justified as an essential of progress, and in large measure as an instance of progress; but human nature is ever prone to extremes, and in the revolt from man's dogma there is danger of casting away God's truth. Christianity is not preserved when we hold by the bare facts of the outward history, unless we take with these facts the interpretation of them, which declares the divinity and the sacrifice of the Son of God.

And on the other hand, let us keep very clear in our minds the broad and impassable gulf of separation between the Christian teaching as embodied in the Scripture and the systems which Christianity has evolved therefrom. Men's intellects must work upon the pabulum that is provided for them, and a theology in a systematised form is a necessity for the intellectual and reasonable life of the Christian Church. But there is all the difference between man's inferences from and systematising of the Christian truth and the truth that lies here. The one is the golden roof that is cast over us; the other is too often but the spiders’ webs that are

spun across and darken its splendour. It is a sign of a wholesome change in the whole sentiment and attitude of the modern Christian mind that the word ‘doctrine,’ which has come to mean men's inferences from God's truth, should have been substituted as it has been in our Revised Version of my text, by the wholesome Christian word ‘teaching.’ The teaching is the facts with the inspired commentary on them.

II. Secondly, notice that this teaching is in Paul's judgment a mould or pattern according to which men's lives are to be conformed.

There can be no question but that, in that teaching as set forth in Scripture, there does lie the mightiest formative power for shaping our lives, and emancipating us from our evil.

Christ is *the* type, the mould into which men are to be cast. The Gospel, as presented in Scripture, gives us three things. It gives us the perfect mould; it gives us the perfect motive; it gives us the perfect power. And in all three things appears its distinctive glory, apart from and above all other systems that have ever tried to affect the conduct or to mould the character of man.

In Jesus Christ we have in due combination, in perfect proportion, all the possible excellences of humanity. As in other cases of perfect symmetry, the very precision of the balanced proportions detracts from the apparent magnitude of the statue or of the fair building, so to a superficial

eye there is but little beauty there that we should desire Him, but as we learn to know Him, and live nearer to Him, and get more familiar with all His sweetness, and with all His power, He towers before us in ever greater and yet never repellent or exaggerated magnitude, and never loses the reality of His brotherhood in the completeness of His perfection. We have in the Christ the one type, the one mould and pattern for all striving, the 'glass of form,' the perfect Man.

And that likeness is not reproduced in us by pressure or by a blow, but by the slow and blessed process of gazing until we become like, beholding the glory until we are changed into the glory.

It is no use having a mould and metal unless you have a fire. It is no use having a perfect Pattern unless you have a motive to copy it. Men do not go to the devil for want of examples; and morality is not at a low ebb by reason of ignorance of what the true type of life is. But nowhere but in the full-orbed teaching of the New Testament will you find a motive strong enough to melt down all the obstinate hardness of the 'northern iron' of the human will, and to make it plastic to His hand. If we can say, 'He loved me and gave Himself for me' then the sum of all morality, the old commandment that 'ye love one another' receives a new stringency, and a fresh motive as well as a deepened interpretation, when His love is our pattern. The

one thing that will make men willing to be like Christ is their faith that Christ is their Sacrifice and their Saviour. And sure I am of this, that no form of mutilated Christianity, which leaves out or falteringly proclaims the truth that Christ died on the Cross for the sins of the world, will ever generate heat enough to mould men's wills, or kindle motives powerful enough to lead to a life of growing imitation of and resemblance to Him. The dial may be all right, the hours most accurately marked in their proper places, every minute registered on the circle, the hands may be all right, delicately fashioned, truly poised, but if there is no main-spring inside, dial and hands are of little use, and a Christianity which says, ‘Christ is the Teacher; do you obey Him?’ is as impotent as the dial face with the broken main-spring. What we need, and what, thank God, in ‘the teaching’ we have, is the pattern brought near to us, and the motive for imitating the pattern, set in motion by the great thought, ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me.’

Still further, the teaching is a power to fashion life, inasmuch as it brings with it a gift which secures the transformation of the believer into the likeness of his Lord. Part of ‘the teaching’ is the fact of Pentecost; part of the teaching is the fact of the Ascension; and the consequence of the Ascension and the sure promise of the Pentecost is that all who love Him, and wait upon Him, shall receive into their hearts the ‘Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’ which shall make them free from the law of sin and death.

So, dear friends, on the one hand, let us remember that our religion is meant to work, that we have nothing in our creed that should not be in our character, that all our *credenda* are to be our *agenda*; everything *believed* to be something *done*; and that if we content ourselves with the simple acceptance of the teaching, and make no effort to translate that teaching into life, we are hypocrites or self-deceivers.

And, on the other hand, do not let us forget that religion is the soul of which morality is the body, and that it is impossible in the nature of things that you shall ever get a true, lofty, moral life which is not based upon religion. I do not say that men cannot be sure of the outlines of their duty without Christianity, though I am free to confess that I think it is a very maimed and shabby version of human duty, which is supplied, minus the special revelation of that duty which Christianity makes; but my point is, that the knowledge will not work without the Gospel.

The Christian type of character is a distinct and manifestly separate thing from the pagan heroism or from the virtues and the righteousnesses of other systems. Just as the musician's ear can tell, by half a dozen bars, whether that strain was Beethoven's, or Handel's, or Mendelssohn's, just as the trained eye can see Raffaelle's magic in every touch of his pencil, so Christ, the Teacher, has a style; and all the scholars of His school carry with them a certain

mark which tells where they got their education and who is their Master, if they are scholars indeed. And that leads me to the last word.

III. This mould demands obedience.

By the very necessity of things it is so. If the 'teaching' was but a teaching of abstract truths it would be enough to assent to them. I believe that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, and I have done my duty by that proposition when I have said 'Yes! it is so.' But the 'teaching' which Jesus Christ gives and *is*, needs a good deal more than that. By the very nature of the teaching, assent drags after it submission. You can please yourself whether you let Jesus Christ into your minds or not, but if you do let Him in, He will be Master. There is no such thing as taking Him in and not obeying.

And so the requirement of the Gospel which we call faith has in it quite as much of the element of obedience as of the element of trust. And the presence of that element is just what makes the difference between a sham and a real faith. 'Faith which has not works is dead, being alone.' A faith which is all trust and no obedience is neither trust nor obedience.

And that is why so many of us do not care to yield ourselves to the faith that is in Jesus Christ. If it simply came to us and said, 'If you will trust Me you will get pardon,' I fancy there would be a good many more of us honest Christians than are so. But Christ comes and

says, ‘Trust Me, follow Me, and take Me for your Master; and be like Me,’ and one's will kicks, and one's passions recoil, and a thousand of the devil's servants within us prick their ears up and stiffen their backs in remonstrance and opposition. ‘Submit’ is Christ's first word; submit by faith, submit in love.

That heart obedience, which is the requirement of Christianity, means freedom. The Apostle draws a wonderful contrast in the context between the slavery to lust and sin, and the freedom which comes from obedience to God and to righteousness. Obey the Truth, and the Truth, in your obeying, shall make you free, for freedom is the willing submission to the limitations which are best. ‘I will walk at liberty for I keep Thy precepts.’ Take Christ for your Master, and, being His servants, you are your own masters, and the world's to boot. For ‘all things are yours if ye are Christ's.’ Refuse to bow your necks to that yoke which is easy, and to take upon your shoulders that burden which is light, and you do not buy liberty, though you buy licentiousness, for you become the slaves and downtrodden vassals of the world and the flesh and the devil, and while you promise yourselves liberty, you become the bondsmen of corruption. Oh! then, let us obey from the heart that mould of teaching to which we are delivered, and so obeying, we shall be free indeed.

‘THY FREE SPIRIT’

> ‘The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’—ROMANS viii. 2.

We have to distinguish two meanings of law. In the stricter sense, it signifies the authoritative expressions of the will of a ruler proposed for the obedience of man; in the wider, almost figurative sense, it means nothing more than the generalised expression of constant similar facts. For instance, objects attract one another in certain circumstances with a force which in the same circumstances is always the same. When that fact is stated generally, we get the law of gravitation. Thus the word comes to mean little more than a regular process. In our text the word is used in a sense much nearer the latter than the former of these two. ‘The law of sin and of death’ cannot mean a series of commandments; it certainly does not mean the Mosaic law. It must either be entirely figurative, taking sin and death as two great tyrants who domineer over men; or it must mean the continuous action of these powers, the process by which they work. These two come substantially to the same idea. The law of sin and of death describes a certain constancy of operation, uniform and fixed, under the dominion of which men are struggling. But there is another constancy of operation, uniform and

fixed too, a mighty antagonistic power, which frees from the dominion of the former: it is ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.’

I. The bondage.

The Apostle is speaking about himself as he was, and we have our own consciousness to verify his transcript of his own personal experience. Paul had found that, by an inexorable iron sequence, sin worked in himself the true death of the soul, in separation from God, in the extinction of good and noble capacities, in the atrophying of all that was best in himself, in the death of joy and peace. And this iron sequence he, with an eloquent paradox, calls a ‘law,’ though its very characteristic is that it is lawless transgression of the true law of humanity. He so describes it, partly, because he would place emphasis on its dominion over us. Sin rules with iron sway; men madly obey it, and even when they think themselves free, are under a bitter tyranny. Further, he desires to emphasise the fact that sin and death are parts of one process which operates constantly and uniformly. This dark anarchy and wild chaos of disobedience and transgression has its laws. All happens there according to rule. Rigid and inevitable as the courses of the stars, or the fall of the leaf from the tree, is sin hurrying on to its natural goal in death. In this fatal dance, sin leads in death; the one fair spoken and full of dazzling promises, the other in the end throws off the mask, and slays. It is true of all who

listen to the tempting voice, and the deluded victim 'knows not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depth of hell.'

II. The method of deliverance.

The previous chapter sounded the depths of human impotence, and showed the tragic impossibility of human efforts to strip off the poisoned garment. Here the Apostle tells the wonderful story of how he himself was delivered, in the full rejoicing confidence that what availed for his emancipation would equally avail for every captived soul. Because he himself has experienced a divine power which breaks the dreadful sequence of sin and of death, he knows that every soul may share in the experience. No mere outward means will be sufficient to emancipate a spirit; no merely intellectual methods will avail to set free the passions and desires which have been captured by sin. It is vain to seek deliverance from a perverted will by any republication, however emphatic, of a law of duty. Nothing can touch the necessities of the case but a gift of power which becomes an abiding influence in us, and develops a mightier energy to overcome the evil tendencies of a sinful soul.

That communicated power must impart life. Nothing short of a Spirit of life, quick and powerful, with an immortal and intense energy, will avail to meet the need. Such a Spirit must give the life which it possesses, must quicken

and bring into action dormant powers in the spirit that it would free. It must implant new energies and directions, new motives, desires, tastes, and tendencies. It must bring into play mightier attractions to neutralise and deaden existing ones; as when to some chemical compound a substance is added which has a stronger affinity for one of the elements, a new thing is made.

Paul's experience, which he had a right to cast into general terms and potentially to extend to all mankind, had taught him that such a new life for such a spirit had come to him by union with Jesus Christ. Such a union, deep and mystical as it is, is, thank God, an experience universal in all true Christians, and constitutes the very heart of the Gospel which Paul rejoiced to believe was entrusted to his hands for the world. His great message of ‘Christ in us’ has been wofully curtailed and mangled when his other message of ‘Christ for us’ has been taken, as it too often has been, to be the whole of his Gospel. They who take either of these inseparable elements to be the whole, rend into two imperfect halves the perfect oneness of the Gospel of Christ.

We are often told that Paul was the true author of Christian doctrine, and are bidden to go back from him to Jesus. If we do so, we hear His grave sweet voice uttering in the upper-room the deep words, ‘I am the Vine, ye are the branches’; and, surely, Paul is but repeating, without metaphor, what Christ, once for all, set

forth in that lovely emblem, when he says that ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.’ The branches in their multitude make the Vine in its unity, and the sap which rises from the deep root through the brown stem, passes to every tremulous leaf, and brings bloom and savour into every cluster. Jesus drew His emblem from the noblest form of vegetative life; Paul, in other places, draws his from the highest form of bodily life, when he points to the many members in one body, and the Head which governs all, and says, ‘So also is Christ.’ In another place he points to the noblest form of earthly love and unity. The blessed fellowship and sacred oneness of husband and wife are an emblem sweet, though inadequate, of the fellowship in love and unity of spirit between Christ and His Church.

And all this mysterious oneness of life has an intensely practical side. In Jesus, and by union with Him, we receive a power that delivers from sin and arrests the stealthy progress of sin's follower, death. Love to Him, the result of fellowship with Him, and the consequence of life received from Him, becomes the motive which makes the redeemed heart delight to do His will, and takes all the power out of every temptation. We are in Him, and He in us, on condition, and by means, of our humble faith; and because my faith thus knits me to Him it is ‘the victory that overcomes the world’ and breaks the chains of many sins. So this communion with Jesus Christ is the way by which we shall increase that

triumphant spiritual life, which is the only victorious antagonist of the else inevitable consequence which declares that the ‘soul that sinneth it shall die,’ and die even in sinning.

III. The process of the deliverance.

Following the R. V. we read ‘made me free,’ not ‘hath made me.’ The reference is obviously, as the Greek more clearly shows, to a single historical event, which some would take to be the Apostle's baptism, but which is more properly supposed to be his conversion. His strong bold language here does not mean that he claims to be sinless. The emancipation is effected, although it is but begun. He holds that at that moment when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, and he yielded to Him as Lord, his deliverance was real, though not complete. He was conscious of a real change of position in reference to that law of sin and of death. Paul distinguishes between the true self and the accumulation of selfish and sensual habits which make up so much of ourselves. The deeper and purer self may be vitalised in will and heart, and set free even while the emancipation is not worked out in the life. The parable of the leaven applies in the individual renewal; and there is no fanaticism, and no harm, in Paul's point of view, if only it be remembered that sins by which passion and externals overbear my better self are mine in responsibility and in consequences. Thus guarded, we may be wholly right in thinking of

all the evils which still cleave to the renewed Christian soul as not being part of it, but destined to drop away.

And this bold declaration is to be vindicated as a prophetic confidence in the supremacy and ultimate dominion of the new power which works even through much antagonism in an imperfect Christian. Paul, too, calls 'things that are not as though they were.' If my spirit of life is the 'Spirit of life in Christ,' it will go on to perfection. It is Spirit, therefore it is informing and conquering the material; it is a divine Spirit, therefore it is omnipotent; it is the Spirit of life, leading in and imparting life like itself, which is kindred with it and is its source; it is the Spirit of life in Christ, therefore leading to life like His, bringing us to conformity with Him because the same causes produce the same effects; it is a life in Christ having a law and regular orderly course of development. So, just as if we have the germ we may hope for fruit, and can see the infantile oak in the tightly-shut acorn, or in the egg the creature which shall afterwards grow there, we have in this gift of the Spirit, the victory. If we have the cause, we have the effects implicitly folded in it; and we have but to wait further development.

The Christian life is to be one long effort, partial, and gradual, to unfold the freedom possessed. Paul knew full well that his emancipation was not perfect. It was, probably, after this triumphant expression of confidence

that he wrote, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.' The first stage is the gift of power, the appropriation and development of that power is the work of a life; and it ought to pass through a well-marked series and cycle of growing changes. The way to develop it is by constant application to the source of all freedom, the life-giving Spirit, and by constant effort to conquer sins and temptations. There is no such thing in the Christian conflict as a painless development. We must mortify the deeds of the body if we are to live in the Spirit. The Christian progress has in it the nature of a crucifixion. It is to be effort, steadily directed for the sake of Christ, and in the joy of His Spirit, to destroy sin, and to win practical holiness. Homely moralities are the outcome and the test of all pretensions to spiritual communion.

We are, further, to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, by 'waiting for the Redemption,' which is not merely passive waiting, but active expectation, as of one who stretches out a welcoming hand to an approaching friend. Nor must we forget that this accomplished deliverance is but partial whilst upon earth. 'The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.' But there may be indefinite approximation to complete deliverance. The metaphors in Scripture under which Christian progress is described, whether drawn from a conflict or a race, or from a building, or from the growth of a tree, all

suggest the idea of constant advance against hindrances, which yet, constant though it is, does not reach the goal here. And this is our noblest earthly condition—not to be pure, but to be tending towards it and conscious of impurity. Hence our tempers should be those of humility, strenuous effort, firm hope. We are as slaves who have escaped, but are still in the wilderness, with the enemies' dogs baying at our feet; but we shall come to the land of freedom, on whose sacred soil sin and death can never tread.

CHRIST CONDEMNING SIN

> 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.'—ROMANS viii. 3.

In the first verse of this chapter we read that 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' The reason of that is, that they are set free from the terrible sequence of cause and effect which constitutes 'the law of sin and death'; and the reason why they are freed from that awful sequence by the power of Christ is, because He has 'condemned sin in the flesh.' The occurrence of the two words 'condemnation' (ver. 1) and 'condemned' (ver. 3) should be

noted. Sin is personified as dwelling in the flesh, which expression here means, not merely the body, but unregenerate human nature. He has made his fortress there, and rules over it all. The strong man keeps his house and his goods are in peace. He laughs to scorn the attempts of laws and moralities of all sorts to cast him out. His dominion is death to the human nature over which he tyrannises. Condemnation is inevitable to the men over whom he rules. They or he must perish. If he escape they die. If he could be slain they might live. Christ comes, condemns the tyrant, and casts him out. So, he being condemned, we are acquitted; and he being slain there is no death for us. Let us try to elucidate a little further this great metaphor by just pondering the two points prominent in it—Sin tyrannising over human nature and resisting all attempts to overcome it, and Christ's condemnation and casting out of the tyrant.

I. Sin tyrannising over human nature, and resisting all attempts to overcome it.

Paul is generalising his own experience when he speaks of the condemnation of an intrusive alien force that holds unregenerate human nature in bondage. He is writing a page of his own autobiography, and he is sure that all the rest of us have like pages in ours. Heart answereth unto heart as in a mirror. If each man is a unity, the poison must run through all his veins and affect his whole nature. Will, understanding, heart, must all be affected and

each in its own way by the intruder; and if men are a collective whole, each man's experience is repeated in his brother's.

The Apostle is equally transcribing his own experience when in the text he sadly admits the futility of all efforts to shake the dominion of sin. He has found in his own case that even the loftiest revelation in the Mosaic law utterly fails in the attempt to condemn sin. This is true not only in regard to the Mosaic law but in regard to the law of conscience, and to moral teachings of any kind. It is obvious that all such laws do condemn sin in the sense that they solemnly declare God's judgment about it, and His sentence on it; but in the sense of real condemnation, or casting out, and depriving sin of its power, they all are impotent. The law may deter from overt acts or lead to isolated acts of obedience; it may stir up antagonism to sin's tyranny, but after that it has no more that it can do. It cannot give the purity which it proclaims to be necessary, nor create the obedience which it enjoins. Its thunders roll terrors, and no fruitful rain follows them to soften the barren soil. There always remains an unbridged gulf between the man and the law.

And this is what Paul points to in saying that it ‘was weak through the flesh.’ It is good in itself, but it has to work through the sinful nature. The only powers to which it can appeal are those which are already in rebellion. A discrowned king whose only forces to conquer

his rebellious subjects are the rebels themselves, is not likely to regain his crown. Because law brings no new element into our humanity, its appeal to our humanity has little more effect than that of the wind whistling through an archway. It appeals to conscience and reason by a plain declaration of what is right; to will and understanding by an exhibition of authority; to fears and prudence by plainly setting forth consequences. But what is to be done with men who know what is right but have no wish to do it, who believe that they ought but will not, who know the consequences but 'choose rather the pleasures of sin for a season,' and shuffle the future out of their minds altogether? This is the essential weakness of all law. The tyrant is not afraid so long as there is no one threatening his reign, but the unarmed herald of a discrowned king. His citadel will not surrender to the blast of the trumpet blown from Sinai.

II. Christ's condemnation and casting out of the tyrant.

The Apostle points to a triple condemnation.

'In the likeness of sinful flesh,' Jesus condemns sin by His own perfect life. That phrase, 'the likeness of the flesh of sin,' implies the real humanity of Jesus, and His perfect sinlessness; and suggests the first way in which He condemns sin in the flesh. In His life He repeats the law in a higher fashion. What the one spoke in words the other realised in

‘loveliness of perfect deeds’; and all men own that example is the mightiest preacher of righteousness, and that active goodness draws to itself reverence and sways men to imitate. But that life lived in human nature gives a new hope of the possibilities of that nature even in us. The dream of perfect beauty ‘in the flesh’ has been realised. What the Man Christ Jesus was, He was that we may become. In the very flesh in which the tyrant rules, Jesus shows the possibility and the loveliness of a holy life.

But this, much as it is, is not all. There is another way in which Christ condemns sin in the flesh, and that is by His perfect sacrifice. To this also Paul points in the phrase, ‘the flesh of sin.’ The example of which we have been speaking is much, but it is weak for the very same reason for which law is weak—that it operates only through our nature as it is; and that is not enough. Sin's hold on man is twofold—one that it has perverted his relation to God, and another that it has corrupted his nature. Hence there is in him a sense of separation from God and a sense of guilt. Both of these not only lead to misery, but positively tend to strengthen the dominion of sin. The leader of the mutineers keeps them true to him by reminding them that the mutiny laws decree death without mercy. Guilt felt may drive to desperation and hopeless continuance in wrong. The cry, ‘I am so bad that it is useless to try to be better,’ is often heard. Guilt stifled leads to hardening of heart, and sometimes to desire and riot. Guilt slurred over

by some easy process of absolution may lead to further sin. Similarly separation from God is the root of all evil, and thoughts of Him as hard and an enemy, always lead to sin. So if the power of sin in the past must be cancelled, the sense of guilt must be removed, and the wall of partition between man and God thrown down. What can law answer to such a demand? It is silent; it can only say, ‘What is written is written.’ It has no word to speak that promises ‘the blotting out of the handwriting that is against us’; and through its silence one can hear the mocking laugh of the tyrant that keeps his castle.

But Christ has come ‘for sin’; that is to say His Incarnation and Death had relation to, and had it for their object to remove, human sin. He comes to blot out the evil, to bring God's pardon. The recognition of His sacrifice supplies the adequate motive to copy His example, and they who see in His death God's sacrifice for man's sin, cannot but yield themselves to Him, and find in obedience a delight. Love kindled at His love makes likeness and transmutes the outward law into an inward ‘spirit of life in Christ Jesus.’

Still another way by which God ‘condemns sin in the flesh’ is pointed to by the remaining phrase of our text, ‘sending His own Son.’ In the beginning of this epistle Jesus is spoken of as ‘being declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness’; and we must connect that saying with our text, and so think of Christ's bestowal of His perfect gift to

humanity of the Spirit which sanctifies as being part of His condemnation of sin in the flesh. Into the very region where the tyrant rules, the Son of God communicates a new nature which constitutes a real new power. The Spirit operates on all our faculties, and redeems them from the bondage of corruption. All the springs in the land are poisoned; but a new one, limpid and pure, is opened. By the entrance of the Spirit of holiness into a human spirit, the usurper is driven from the central fortress: and though he may linger in the outworks and keep up a guerilla warfare, that is all that he can do. We never truly apprehend Christ's gift to man until we recognise that He not merely ‘died for our sins,’ but lives to impart the principle of holiness in the gift of His Spirit. The dominion of that imparted Spirit is gradual and progressive. The Canaanite may still be in the land, but a growing power, working in and through us, is warring against all in us that still owns allegiance to that alien power, and there can be no end to the victorious struggle until the whole body, soul, and spirit, be wholly under the influence of the Spirit that dwelleth in us, and nothing shall hurt or destroy in what shall then be all God's holy mountain.

Such is, in the most general terms, the statement of what Christ does ‘for us’; and the question comes to be the all-important one for each, Do I let Him do it for me? Remember the alternative. There must either be condemnation for us, or for the sin that dwelleth in us. There is

no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus, because there is condemnation for the sin that dwells in them. It must he slain, or it will slay us. It must be cast out, or it will cast us out from God. It must be separated from us, or it will separate us from Him. We need not be condemned, but if it be not condemned, then we shall be.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

> 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'—ROMANS viii. 18.

The sin of the world is a false confidence, a careless, complacent taking for granted that a man is a Christian when he is not. The fault, and sorrow, and weakness of the Church is a false diffidence, an anxious fear whether a man be a Christian when he is. There are none so far away from false confidence as those who tremble lest they be cherishing it. There are none so inextricably caught in its toils as those who are all unconscious of *its* existence and of *their* danger. The two things, the false confidence and the false diffidence, are perhaps more akin to one another than they look at first sight. Their opposites, at all events—the true confidence, which is faith in Christ; and the true diffidence, which is utter distrust of myself—are identical. But there may sometimes be, and there often is,

the combination of a real confidence and a false diffidence, the presence of faith, and the doubt whether it be present. Many Christians go through life with this as the prevailing temper of their minds—a doubt sometimes arising almost to agony, and sometimes dying down into passive patient acceptance of the condition as inevitable—a doubt whether, after all, they be not, as they say, 'deceiving themselves'; and in the perverse ingenuity with which that state of mind is constantly marked, they manage to distil for themselves a bitter vinegar of self-accusation out of grand words in the Bible, that were meant to afford them but the wine of gladness and of consolation.

Now this great text which I have ventured to take—not with the idea that I can exalt it or say anything worthy of it, but simply in the hope of clearing away some misapprehensions—is one that has often and often tortured the mind of Christians. They say of themselves, 'I know nothing of any such evidence: I am not conscious of any Spirit bearing witness with my spirit.' Instead of looking to other sources to answer the question whether they are Christians or not—and then, having answered it, thinking thus, 'That text asserts that *all* Christians have this witness, therefore certainly I have it in some shape or other,' they say to themselves, 'I do not feel anything that corresponds with my idea of what such a grand, supernatural voice as the witness of God's Spirit in my spirit must needs be; and therefore I doubt whether I am a

Christian at all.' I should be thankful if the attempt I make now to set before you what seems to me to be the true teaching of the passage, should be, with God's help, the means of lifting some little part of the burden from some hearts that are right, and that only long to know that they are, in order to be at rest.

'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' The general course of thought which I wish to leave with you may be summed up thus: Our cry 'Father' is the witness that we are sons. That cry is not simply ours, but it is the voice of God's Spirit. The divine Witness in our spirits is subject to the ordinary influences which affect our spirits.

Let us take these three thoughts, and dwell on them for a little while.

I. Our cry 'Father' is the witness that we are sons.

Mark the terms of the passage: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness *with* our spirit—.' It is not so much a revelation made to my spirit, considered as the recipient of the testimony, as a revelation made in or with my spirit considered as co-operating in the testimony. It is not that my spirit says one thing, bears witness that I am a child of God; and that the Spirit of God comes in by a distinguishable process, with a separate evidence, to say Amen to my persuasion; but it is that there is one testimony which has a conjoint

origin—the origin from the Spirit of God as true source, and the origin from my own soul as recipient and co-operant in that testimony. From the teaching of this passage, or from any of the language which Scripture uses with regard to the inner witness, it is not to be inferred that there will rise up in a Christian's heart, from some origin consciously beyond the sphere of his own nature, a voice with which he has nothing to do; which at once, by its own character, by something peculiar and distinguishable about it, by something strange in its nature, or out of the ordinary course of human thinking, shall certify itself to be not his voice at all, but *God's* voice. That is not the direction in which you are to look for the witness of God's Spirit. It is evidence borne, indeed, by the Spirit of God; but it is evidence borne not only to our spirit, but through it, with it. The testimony is one, the testimony of a man's own emotion, and own conviction, and own desire, the cry, Abba, Father! So far, then, as the form of the evidence goes, you are not to look for it in anything ecstatic, arbitrary, parted off from your own experience by a broad line of demarcation; but you are to look into the experience which at first sight you would claim most exclusively for your own, and to try and find out whether *there* there be not working with your soul, working through it, working beneath it, distinct from it but not distinguishable from it by anything but its consequences and its fruitfulness—a deeper voice than yours—a ‘still small voice,’—no

whirlwind, nor fire, nor earthquake—but the voice of God speaking in secret, taking the voice and tones of your own heart and your own consciousness, and saying to you, 'Thou art my child, inasmuch as, operated by My grace, and Mine inspiration alone, there rises, tremblingly but truly, in thine own soul the cry, Abba, Father.'

So much, then, for the form of this evidence—my own conviction. Then with regard to the substance of it: conviction of what? The text itself does not tell us what is the evidence which the Spirit bears, and by reason of which we have a right to conclude that we are the children of God. The previous verse tells us. I have partially anticipated what I have to say on that point, but it will bear a little further expansion. 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.' 'The Spirit itself,' by this means of our cry, Abba, Father, 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.' The substance, then, of the conviction which is lodged in the human spirit by the testimony of the Spirit of God is not primarily directed to our relation or feelings to God, but to a far grander thing than that—to God's feelings and relation to us. Now I want you to think for one moment, before I pass on, how entirely different the whole aspect of this witness of the Spirit of which Christian men speak so much, and sometimes with so little understanding, becomes according as you regard it mistakenly

as being the direct testimony to you that you are a child of God, or rightly as being the direct testimony to you that God is your Father. The two things seem to be the same, but they are not. In the one case, the false case, the mistaken interpretation, we are left to this, that a man has no deeper certainty of his condition, no better foundation for his hope, than what is to be drawn from the presence or absence of certain emotions within his own heart. In the other case, we are admitted into this 'wide place,' that all which is our own is second and not first, and that the true basis of all our confidence lies not in the thought of what we are and feel to God, but in the thought of what God is and feels to us. And instead, therefore, of being left to labour for ourselves, painfully to search amongst the dust and rubbish of our own hearts, we are taught to sweep away all that crumbled, rotten surface, and to go down to the living rock that lies beneath it; we are taught to say, in the words of the book of Isaiah, 'Doubtless Thou art our Father—we are all an unclean thing; our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away'; there is nothing stable in us; our own resolutions, they are swept away like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, by the first gust of temptation; but what of that?—'in those is continuance, and we shall be saved!' Ah, brethren! expand this thought of the conviction that God is my Father, as being the basis of all my confidence that I am His child, into its widest and grandest form, and it leads us up to

the blessed old conviction, I am nothing, my holiness is nothing, my resolutions are nothing, my faith is nothing, my energies are nothing; I stand stripped, and barren, and naked of everything, and I fling myself out of myself into the merciful arms of my Father in heaven! There is all the difference in the world between searching for evidence of my sonship, and seeking to get the conviction of God's Fatherhood. The one is an endless, profitless, self-tormenting task; the other is the light and liberty, the glorious liberty, of the children of God.

And so the *substance* of the Spirit's evidence is the direct conviction based on the revelation of God's infinite love and fatherhood in Christ the Son, that God is my Father; from which direct conviction I come to the conclusion, the inference, the second thought, Then I may trust that I am His son. But why? Because of anything in me? No: because of Him. The very emblem of fatherhood and sonship might teach us that *that* depends upon the Father's will and the Father's heart. The Spirit's testimony has for form my own conviction: and for substance my humble cry, ‘Oh Thou, my Father in heaven!’ Brethren, is not that a far truer and nobler kind of thing to preach than saying, Look into your own heart for strange, extraordinary, distinguishable signs which shall mark you out as God's child—and which are proved to be His Spirit's, because they are separated from the ordinary human consciousness? Is it not far more blessed for us,

and more honouring to Him who works the sign, when we say, that it is to be found in no out-of-rule, miraculous evidence, but in the natural (which is in reality supernatural) working of His Spirit in the heart which is its recipient, breeding there the conviction that God is my Father? And oh, if I am speaking to any to whom that text, with all its light and glory, has seemed to lift them up into an atmosphere too rare and a height too lofty for their heavy wings and unused feet, if I am speaking to any Christian man to whom this word has been like the cherubim and flaming sword, bright and beautiful, but threatening and repellent when it speaks of a Spirit that bears witness with our spirit—I ask you simply to take the passage for yourself, and carefully and patiently to examine it, and see if it be not true what I have been saying, that your trembling conviction—sister and akin as it is to your deepest distrust and sharpest sense of sin and unworthiness—that your trembling conviction of a love mightier than your own, everlasting and all-faithful, is indeed the selectest sign that God can give you that you *are* His child. Oh, brethren and sisters! be confident; for it is not false confidence: be confident if up from the depths of that dark well of your own sinful heart there rises sometimes, through all the bitter waters, unpolluted and separate, a sweet conviction, forcing itself upward, that God hath love in His heart, and that God is *my* Father. Be confident; 'the Spirit itself beareth witness with your spirit.'

II. And now, secondly, That cry is not simply ours, but it is the voice of God's Spirit.

Our own convictions are ours because they are God's. Our own souls possess these emotions of love and tender desire going out to God—our own spirits possess them; but our own spirits did not originate them. They are ours by property; they are His by source. The spirit of a Christian man has no good thought in it, no true thought, no perception of the grace of God's Gospel, no holy desire, no pure resolution, which is not stamped with the sign of a higher origin, and is not the witness of God's Spirit in his spirit. The passage before us tells us that the sense of Fatherhood which is in the Christian's heart, and becomes his cry, comes from God's Spirit. This passage, and that in the Epistle to the Galatians which is almost parallel, put this truth very forcibly, when taken in connection. ‘Ye have received,’ says the text before us, ‘the Spirit of adoption, whereby *we* cry, Abba, Father.’ The variation in the Epistle to the Galatians is this: ‘Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, *crying* (the Spirit crying), Abba, Father.’ So in the one text, the cry is regarded as the voice of the believing heart; and in the other the same cry is regarded as the voice of God's Spirit. And these two things are both true; the one would want its foundation if it were not for the other; the cry of the Spirit is nothing for me unless it be appropriated by me. I do not need to plunge here into metaphysical speculation of any sort, but simply

to dwell upon the plain practical teaching of the Bible—a teaching verified, I believe, by every Christian's experience, if he will search into it—that everything in him which makes the Christian life, is not his, but is God's by origin, and his only by gift and inspiration. And the whole doctrine of my text is built on this one thought—without the Spirit of God in your heart, you never can recognise God as your Father. That in us which runs, with love, and childlike faith, and reverence, to the place 'where His honour dwelleth,' that in us which says 'Father,' is kindred with God, and is not the simple, unhelped, unsanctified human nature. There is no ascent of human desires above their source. And wherever in a heart there springs up heavenward a thought, a wish, a prayer, a trembling confidence, it is because that came down first from heaven, and rises to seek its level again. All that is divine in man comes from God. All that tends towards God in man is God's voice in the human heart; and were it not for the possession and operation, the sanctifying and quickening, of a living divine Spirit granted to us, our souls would for ever cleave to the dust and dwell upon earth, nor ever rise to God and live in the light of His presence. Every Christian, then, may be sure of this, that howsoever feeble may be the thought and conviction in his heart of God's Fatherhood, *he* did not work it, he received it only, cherished it, thought of it, watched over it, was careful not to quench it; but in origin it was God's, and it is now and ever

the voice of the Divine Spirit in the child's heart.

But, my friends, if this principle be true, it does not apply only to this one single attitude of the believing soul when it cries, Abba, Father; it must be widened out to comprehend the whole of a Christian's life, outward and inward, which is not sinful and darkened with actual transgression. To all the rest of his being, to everything in heart and life which is right and pure, the same truth applies. ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit’ in every perception of God's word which is granted, in every revelation of His counsel which dawns upon our darkness, in every aspiration after Him which lifts us above the smoke and dust of this dim spot, in every holy resolution, in every thrill and throb of love and desire. Each of these is mine—inasmuch as in my heart it is experienced and transacted; it is mine, inasmuch as I am not a mere dead piece of matter, the passive recipient of a magical and supernatural grace; but it is God's; and therefore, and therefore only, has it come to be mine!

And if it be objected, that this opens a wide door to all manner of delusion, and that there is no more dangerous thing than for a man to confound his own thoughts with the operations of God's Spirit, let me just give you (following the context before us) the one guarantee and test which the Apostle lays down. He says, ‘There is a witness from God in your spirits.’ You may say, That witness, if it come in the form of these

convictions in my own heart, I may mistake and falsely read. Well, then, here is an outward guarantee. ‘As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God’; and so, on the regions both of heart and of life the consecrating thought,—God's work, and God's Spirit's work—is stamped. The heart with its love, the head with its understanding, the conscience with its quick response to the law of duty, the will with its resolutions,—these are all, as sanctified by Him, the witness of His Spirit; and the life with its strenuous obedience, with its struggles against sin and temptation, with its patient persistence in the quiet path of ordinary duty, as well as with the times when it rises into heroic stature of resignation or allegiance, the martyrdom of death and the martyrdom of life, this too is all (in so far as it is pure and right) the work of that same Spirit. The test of the inward conviction is the outward life; and they that have the witness of the Spirit within them have the light of their life lit by the Spirit of God, whereby they may read the handwriting on the heart, and be sure that it is God's and not their own.

III. And now, lastly, this divine Witness in our spirits is subject to the ordinary influences which affect our spirits.

The notion often prevails that if there be in the heart this divine witness of God's Spirit, it must needs be perfect, clearly indicating its origin by an exemption from all that besets

ordinary human feelings, that it must be a strong, uniform, never flickering, never darkening, and perpetual light, a kind of vestal fire burning always on the altar of the heart! The passage before us, and all others that speak about the matter, give us the directly opposite notion. The Divine Spirit, when it enters into the narrow room of the human spirit, condescends to submit itself, not wholly, but to such an extent as practically for our present purpose *is* wholly to submit itself to the ordinary laws and conditions and contingencies which befall and regulate our own human nature. Christ came into the world divine: He was 'found in fashion as a man,' in form a servant; the humanity that He wore limited (if you like), regulated, modified, the manifestation of the divinity that dwelt in it. And not otherwise is the operation of God's Holy Spirit when it comes to dwell in a human heart. There too, working through man, *it* 'is found in fashion as a man'; and though the origin of the conviction be of God, and though the voice in my heart be not only my voice, but God's voice there, it will obey those same laws which make human thoughts and emotions vary, and fluctuate, flicker and flame up again, burn bright and burn low, according to a thousand circumstances. The witness of the Spirit, if it were yonder in heaven, would shine like a perpetual star; the witness of the Spirit, here in the heart on earth, burns like a flickering flame, never to be extinguished, but still not always bright, wanting to be trimmed, and needing to

be guarded from rude blasts. Else, brother, what does an Apostle mean when he says to you and me, 'Quench not the Spirit'? what does he mean when he says to us, 'Grieve not the Spirit'? What does the whole teaching which enjoins on us, 'Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning,' and 'What I say to you, I say to all, Watch!' mean, unless it means this, that God-given as (God be thanked!) that conviction of Fatherhood is, it is not given in such a way as that, irrespective of our carefulness, irrespective of our watching, it shall burn on—the same and unchangeable? The Spirit's witness comes from God, therefore it is veracious, divine, omnipotent; but the Spirit's witness from God is in man, therefore it may be wrongly read, it may be checked, it may for a time be kept down, and prevented from showing itself to be what it is.

And the practical conclusion that comes from all this, is just the simple advice to you all: Do not wonder, in the first place, if that evidence of which we speak, vary and change in its clearness and force in your own hearts. 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.' Do not think that it cannot be genuine, because it is changeful. There is a sun in the heavens, but there are heavenly lights too that wax and wane; they *are* lights, they *are* in the heavens though they change. You have no reason, Christian man, to be discouraged, cast down, still less despondent, because you find that the witness of the Spirit changes and varies in your heart. Do not despond because it does;

watch it, and guard it, lest it do; live in the contemplation of the Person and the fact that calls it forth, that it may not. You will never 'brighten your evidences' by polishing at them. To polish the mirror ever so assiduously does not secure the image of the sun on its surface. The only way to do that is to carry the poor bit of glass out into the sunshine. It will shine then, never fear. It is weary work to labour at self-improvement with the hope of drawing from our own characters evidences that we are the sons of God. To have the heart filled with the light of Christ's love to us is the only way to have the whole being full of light. If you would have clear and irrefragable, for a perpetual joy, a glory and a defence, the unwavering confidence, 'I am Thy child,' go to God's throne, and lie down at the foot of it, and let the first thought be, 'My Father in heaven,' and *that* will brighten, that will stablish, that will make omnipotent in your life the witness of the Spirit that you are the child of God.

SONS AND HEIRS

> 'If children, then heirs; heirs of God,
> and joint-heirs with Christ.'—
> ROMANS viii. 17.

God Himself is His greatest gift. The loftiest blessing which we can receive is that we should be heirs, possessors of God. There is a sublime

and wonderful mutual possession of which Scripture speaks much wherein the Lord is the inheritance of Israel, and Israel is the inheritance of the Lord. ‘The Lord hath taken you to be to Him a people of inheritance,’ says Moses; ‘Ye are a people for a possession,’ says Peter. And, on the other hand, ‘The Lord is the portion of my inheritance,’ says David; ‘Ye are heirs of God,’ echoes Paul. On earth and in heaven the heritage of the children of the Lord is God Himself, inasmuch as He is with them for their delight, in them to make them ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and for them in all His attributes and actions.

This being clearly understood at the outset, we shall be prepared to follow the Apostle's course of thought while he points out the conditions upon which the possession of that inheritance depends. It is children of God who are heirs of God. It is by union with Christ Jesus, the Son, to whom the inheritance belongs, that they who believe on His name receive power to become the sons of God, and with that power the possession of the inheritance. Thus, then, in this condensed utterance of the text there appear a series of thoughts which may perhaps be more fully unfolded in some such manner as the following, that there is no inheritance without sonship, that there is no sonship without a spiritual birth, that there is no spiritual birth without Christ, and that there is no Christ for us without faith.

I. First, then, the text tells us, no inheritance without sonship.

In general terms, spiritual blessings can only be given to those who are in a certain spiritual condition. Always and necessarily the capacity or organ of reception precedes and determines the bestowment of blessings. The light falls everywhere, but only the eye drinks it in. The lower orders of creatures are shut out from all participation in the gifts which belong to the higher forms of life, simply because they are so made and organised as that these cannot find entrance into their nature. They are, as it were, walled up all round; and the only door they have to communicate with the outer world is the door of sense. Man has higher gifts simply because he has higher capacities. All creatures are plunged in the same boundless ocean of divine beneficence and bestowment, and into each there flows just that, and no more, which each, by the make and constitution that God has given it, is capable of receiving. In the man there are more windows and doors opened out than in the animal He is capable of receiving intellectual impulses, spiritual emotions; he can think, and feel, and desire, and will, and resolve: and so he stands on a higher level than the beast below him.

Not otherwise is it in regard to God's kingdom, ‘which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ The gift and blessing of salvation is primarily a spiritual gift, and only

involves outward consequences secondarily and subordinately. It mainly consists in the heart being at peace with God, in the whole soul being filled with divine affections, in the weight and bondage of transgression being taken away, and substituted by the impulse and the life of the new love. Therefore, neither God can give, nor man can receive, that gift upon any other terms, than just this, that the heart and nature be fitted and adapted for it. Spiritual blessings require a spiritual capacity for the reception of them; or, as my text says, you cannot have the inheritance unless you are sons. If salvation consisted simply in a change of place; if it were merely that by some expedient or arrangement, an outward penalty, which was to fall or not to fall at the will of an arbitrary judge, were prevented from coming down, why then, it would be open to Him who held the power of letting the sword fall, to decide on what terms He might choose to suspend its infliction. But inasmuch as God's deliverance is not a deliverance from a mere arbitrary and outward punishment: inasmuch as God's salvation, though it be deliverance from the penalty as well as from the guilt of sin, is by no means chiefly a deliverance from outward consequences, but mainly a removal of the nature and disposition that makes these outward consequences certain,—therefore a man cannot be saved, God's love cannot save him, God's justice will not save him, God's power stands back from saving him, upon any other condition than this that his soul shall be adapted and

prepared for the reception and enjoyment of the blessing of a spiritual salvation.

But the inheritance which my text speaks about is also that which a Christian hopes to receive and enter upon in heaven. The same principle precisely applies there. There is no inheritance of heaven without sonship; because all the blessings of that future life are of a spiritual character. The joy and the rapture and the glory of that higher and better life have, of course, connected with them certain changes of bodily form, certain changes of local dwelling, certain changes which could perhaps be granted equally to a man, of whatever sort he was. But, friends, it is not the golden harps, not the pavement of 'glass mingled with fire,' not the cessation from work, not the still composure, and changeless indwelling, not the society even, that makes the heaven of heaven. All these are but the embodiments and rendering visible of the inward facts, a soul at peace with God in the depths of its being, an eye which gazes upon the Father, and a heart which wraps itself in His arms. Heaven is no heaven except in so far as it is the possession of God. That saying of the Psalmist is not an exaggeration, nor even a forgetting of the other elements of future blessedness, but it is a simple statement of the literal fact of the case, 'I have none in heaven but Thee!' God is the heritage of His people. To dwell in His love, and to be filled with His light, and to walk for ever in the glory of His sunlit face, to do His will, and to bear His character

stamped upon our foreheads—*that* is the glory and the perfectness to which we are aspiring. Do not then rest in the symbols that show us, darkly and far off, what that future glory is. Do not forget that the picture is a shadow. Get beneath all these figurative expressions, and feel that whilst it may be true that for us in our present earthly state, there can be no higher, no purer, no more spiritual nor any truer representations of the blessedness which is to come, than those which couch it in the forms of earthly experience, and appeal to sense as the minister of delight—yet that all these things are representations, and not adequate presentations. The inheritance of the servants of the Lord is the Lord Himself, and they dwell in Him, and *there* is their joy.

Well then, if that be even partially true—admitting all that you may say about circumstances which go to make some portion of the blessedness of that future life—if it be true that God is the true blessing given by His Gospel upon earth, that He Himself is the greatest gift that can be bestowed, and that He is the true Heaven of heaven—what a flood of light does it cast upon that statement of my text, 'If children, then heirs'; no inheritance without sonship! For who can possess God but they who love Him? who can love, but they who know His love? who can have Him working in their hearts a blessed and sanctifying change, except the souls that lie thankfully quiet beneath the forming touch of His invisible hand, and like flowers drink in the

light of His face in their still joy? How can God dwell in any heart except a heart which has in it a love of purity? Where can He make His temple except in the ‘upright heart and pure’? How can there be fellowship betwixt Him and any one except the man who is a son because he hath received of the divine nature, and in whom that divine nature is growing up into a divine likeness? ‘What fellowship hath Christ with Belial?’ is not only applicable as a guide for our practical life, but points to the principle on which God's inheritance belongs to God's sons alone. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’; and those only who love, and are children, to them alone does the Father come and does the Father belong.

So much, then, for the first principle: No inheritance without sonship.

II. Secondly, the text leads us to the principle that there is no sonship without a spiritual birth.

The Apostle John in that most wonderful preface to his Gospel, where all deepest truths concerning the Eternal Being in itself and in the solemn march of His progressive revelations to the world are set forth in language simple like the words of a child and inexhaustible like the voice of a god, draws a broad distinction between the relation to the manifestations of God which every human soul by virtue of his humanity sustains, and that into which some, by virtue of their faith, enter. Every man is lighted

by the true light because he is a man. They who believe in His name receive from Him the prerogative to become the sons of God. Whatever else may be taught in John's words, surely they do teach us this, that the sonship of which he speaks does not belong to man as man, is not a relation into which we are born by natural birth, that we *become* sons after we *are* men, that those who become sons do not include all those who are lighted by the Light, but consist of so many of that greater number as receive Him, and that such become sons by a divine act, the communication of a spiritual life, whereby they are born of God.

The same Apostle, in his Epistles, where the widest love is conjoined with the most firmly drawn lines of moral demarcation between the great opposites—life, light, love—death, darkness, hate—contrasts in the most unmistakable antithesis the sons of God who are known for such because they do righteousness, and the world which knew not Christ, nor knows those who, dimly beholding, partially resemble Him. Nay, he goes further, and says in strange contradiction to the popular estimate of his character, but in true imitation of that Incarnate love which hated iniquity, 'In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the devil'—echoing thus the words of Him whose pitying tenderness had sometimes to clothe itself in sharpest words, even as His hand of powerful love had once to grasp the scourge of small cords. 'If God were your Father, ye would love

Me: ye are of your father, the devil.'

These are but specimens of a whole cycle of Scripture statements which in every form of necessary implication, and of direct statement, set forth the principle that he who is born again of the Spirit, and he only, is a son of God.

Nothing in all this contradicts the belief that all men are the children of God, inasmuch as they are shaped by His divine hand and He has breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. They who hold that sonship is obtained on the condition which these passages seem to assert, do also rejoice to believe and to preach that the Father's love broods over every human heart as the dovelike Spirit over the primeval chaos. They rejoice to proclaim that Christ has come that all, that each, may receive the adoption of sons. They do not feel that their message to, nor their hope for, the world is less blessed, less wide, because while they call on all to come and take the things that are freely given to them of God, they believe that those only who do come and take possess the blessing. Every man may become a son and heir of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

But notwithstanding all the mercies that belong to us all, notwithstanding the divine beneficence, which, like the air and the light, pervades all nature, and underlies all our lives, notwithstanding the universal adaptation and intention of Christ's work, notwithstanding the

wooing of His tender voice and the unceasing beckoning of His love, it still remains true that there are men in the world, created by God, loved and cared for by Him, for whom Christ died, who might be, but are not, sons of God.

Fatherhood! what does that word itself teach us? It speaks of the communication of a life, and the reciprocity of love. It rests upon a divine act, and it involves a human emotion. It involves that the father and the child shall have kindred life—the father bestowing and the child possessing a life which is derived; and because derived, kindred; and because kindred, unfolding itself in likeness to the father that gave it. And it requires that between the father's heart and the child's heart there shall pass, in blessed interchange and quick correspondence, answering love, flashing backwards and forwards, like the lightning that touches the earth and rises from it again. A simple appeal to your own consciousness will decide if that be the condition of all men. Are you, my brother, conscious of anything within you higher than the common life that belongs to you because you are an immortal soul? Can you say, ‘From God's hand I have received the granting and implantation of a new and better life?’ Is your claim verified by this, that you are kindred with God in holy affections, in like purposes, loving what He loves, hating what He hates, doing what He wills, accepting what He sends, longing for Himself, and blessed in His presence? Is your sonship proved by the depth and sincerity, the

simplicity and power, of your throbbing heart of love to your Father in heaven? Or are all these emotions empty words to you, things that are spoken in pulpits, but to which you have nothing in your life corresponding? Oh then, my friend, what am I to say to you? What but this? no sonship except by that spiritual birth; and if not such sonship, then the spirit of bondage. If not such sonship, why then, by all the tendencies of your nature, and by all the affinities of your moral being, if you are not holding of heaven, you are holding of hell; if you are not drawing your life, your character, your emotions, your affections, from the sacred well that lies up yonder, you are drawing them from the black one that lies down there. There are heaven, hell, and the earth that lies between, ever influenced either from above or from below. You are sons because born again, or slaves and 'enemies by wicked works.' It is a grim alternative, but it is a fact.

III. Thirdly, no spiritual birth without Christ.

We have seen that the sonship which gives power of possessing the inheritance and which comes by spiritual birth, rests upon the giving of life, spiritual life, from God; and unfolds itself in certain holy characters, and affections, and desires, the throbbing of the whole soul in full accord and harmony with the divine character and will. Well then, it looks very clear that a man cannot make that new life for himself, cannot do it because of the habit of sin, and

cannot do it because of the guilt and punishment of sin. If for sonship there must be a birth again, why, surely, the very symbol might convince you that such a process does not lie within our own power. There must come down a divine leaven into the mass of human nature, before this new being can be evolved in any one. There must be a gift of God. A divine energy must be the source and fountain of all holy and of all Godlike life. Christ comes, comes to make you and me live again as we never lived before; live possessors of God's love; live tenanted and ruled by a divine Spirit; live with affections in our hearts which *we* never could kindle there; live with purposes in our souls which *we* never could put there.

And I want to urge this thought, that the centre point of the Gospel is this regeneration; because if we understand, as we are too much disposed to do, that the Gospel simply comes to make men live better, to work out a moral reformation,—why, there is no need for a Gospel at all. If the change were a simple change of habit and action on the part of men, we could do without a Christ. If the change simply involved a bracing ourselves up to behave better for the future, we could manage somehow or other about as well as or better than we have managed in the past. But if redemption be the giving of life from God; and if redemption be the change of position in reference to God's love and God's law as well, neither of these two changes can a man effect for himself. You cannot gather up the

spilt water; you cannot any more gather up and re-issue the past life. The sin remains, the guilt remains. The inevitable law of God will go on its crashing way in spite of all penitence, in spite of all reformation, in spite of all desires after newness of life. There is but one Being who can make a change in our position in regard to God, and there is but one Being who can make the change by which man shall become a 'new creature.' The Creative Spirit that shaped the earth must shape its new being in my soul; and the Father against whose law I have offended, whose love I have slighted, from whom I have turned away, must effect the alteration that I can never effect—the alteration in my position to His judgments and justice, and to the whole sweep of His government. No new birth without Christ; no escape from the old standing-place, of being 'enemies to God by wicked works,' by anything that we can do: no hope of the inheritance unless the Lord and the Man, the 'second Adam from heaven,' have come! He *has* come, and He has 'dwelt with us,' and He has worn this life of ours, and He has walked in the midst of this world, and He knows all about our human condition, and He has effected an actual change in the possible aspect of the divine justice and government to us; and He has carried in the golden urn of His humanity a new spirit and a new life which He has set down in the midst of the race; and the urn was broken on the cross of Calvary, and the water flowed out, and whithersoever that water comes there is life, and

whithersoever it comes not there is death!

IV. Last of all, no Christ without faith.

It is not enough, brethren, that we should go through all these previous steps, if we then go utterly astray at the end, by forgetting that there is only one way by which we become partakers of any of the benefits and blessings that Christ has wrought out. It is much to say that for inheritance there must be sonship. It is much to say that for sonship there must be a divine regeneration. It is much to say that the power of this regeneration is all gathered together in Christ Jesus. But there are plenty of people that would agree to all that, who go off at that point, and content themselves with *this* kind of thinking—that in some vague mysterious way, they know not how, in a sort of half-magical manner, the benefit of Christ's death and work comes to all in Christian lands, whether there be an act of faith or not! Now I am not going to talk theology at present, at this stage of my sermon; but what I want to leave upon all your hearts is this profound conviction,—Unless we are wedded to Jesus Christ by the simple act of trust in His mercy and His power, Christ is nothing to us. Do not let us, my friends, blink that deciding test of the whole matter. We may talk about Christ for ever; we may set forth aspects of His work, great and glorious. He may be to us much that is very precious; but the one question, the question of questions, on which everything else depends, is, Am I trusting to Him as my divine

Redeemer? am I resting in Him as the Son of God? Some of us here now have a sort of nominal connection with Christ, who have a kind of imaginative connection with Him; traditional, ceremonial, by habit of thought, by attendance on public worship, and by I know not what other means. Ceremonies are nothing, notions are nothing, beliefs are nothing, formal participation in worship is nothing. Christ is everything to him that trusts Him. Christ is nothing but a judge and a condemnation to him who trusts Him not. And here is the turning-point, Am I resting upon that Lord for my salvation? If so, you can begin upon that step, the low one on which you can put your foot, the humble act of faith, and with the foot there, can climb up. If faith, then new birth; if new birth, then sonship; if sonship, then an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ.' But if you have not got your foot upon the lowest round of the ladder, you will never come within sight of the blessed face of Him who stands at the top of it, and who looks down to you at this moment, saying to you, 'My child, *wilt* thou not cry unto Me "Abba, Father?"'

SUFFERING WITH CHRIST, A CONDITION OF GLORY WITH CHRIST

> '...Joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.'—ROMANS viii. 17.

In the former part of this verse the Apostle tells us that in order to be heirs of God, we must become sons through and joint-heirs with Christ. He seems at first sight to add in these words of our text another condition to those already specified, namely, that of suffering with Christ.

Now, of course, whatever may be the operation of suffering in fitting for the possession of the Christian inheritance, either here or in another world, the sonship and the sorrows do not stand on the same level in regard to that possession. The one is the indispensable condition of all; the other is but the means for the operation of the condition. The one—being sons, 'joint-heirs with Christ,'—is the root of the whole matter; the other—the 'suffering with Him,'—is but the various process by which from the root there come 'the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear.' Given the sonship—if it is to be worked out into power and beauty, there must be suffering with Christ. But unless there be sonship, there is no possibility of inheriting God; discipline and suffering will be of no use at all.

The chief lesson which I wish to gather from this text now is that all God's sons must suffer with Christ; and in addition to this principle, we

may complete our considerations by adding briefly, that the inheritance must be won by suffering, and that if we suffer with Him, we certainly shall receive the inheritance.

I. First, then, sonship with Christ necessarily involves suffering with Him.

I think that we entirely misapprehend the force of this passage before us, if we suppose it to refer principally or merely to the outward calamities, what you call trials and afflictions, which befall people, and see in it only the teaching, that the sorrows of daily life may have in them a sign of our being children of God, and some power to prepare us for the glory that is to come. There is a great deal more in the thought than that, brethren. This is not merely a text for people who are in affliction, but for all of us. It does not merely contain a law for a certain part of life, but it contains a law for the whole of life. It is not merely a promise that in all our afflictions Christ will be afflicted, but it is a solemn injunction that we seek to know 'the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to the likeness of His death,' if we expect to be 'found in the likeness of His Resurrection,' and to have any share in the community of His glory. In other words, the foundation of it is not that Christ shares in our sufferings; but that we, as Christians, in a deep and real sense do necessarily share and participate in Christ's. We 'suffer with Him'; *not* He suffers with us.

Now, do not let us misunderstand each other, or the Apostle's teaching. Do not suppose that I am forgetting, or wishing you to account as of small importance, the awful sense in which Christ's suffering stands as a thing by itself and unapproachable, a solitary pillar rising up, above the waste of time, to which all men everywhere are to turn with the one thought, 'I can do nothing like that; I need to do nothing like it; it has been done once, and once for all; and what I have to do is, simply to lie down before Him, and let the power and the blessings of that death and those sufferings flow into my heart.' The Divine Redeemer makes eternal redemption. The sufferings of Christ—the sufferings of His life, and the sufferings of His death—both because of the nature which bore them, and of the aspect which they wore in regard to us, are in their source, in their intensity, in their character, and consequences, unapproachable, incapable of repetition, and needing no repetition whilst the world shall stand. But then, do not let us forget that the very books and writers in the New Testament that preach most broadly Christ's sole, all-sufficient, eternal redemption for the world by His sufferings and death, turn round and say to us too, '"Be planted together in the likeness of His death"; you are "crucified to the world" by the Cross of Christ; you are to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ."' He Himself speaks of our drinking of the cup that He drank of, and being baptized with the baptism that He

was baptized with, if we desire to sit yonder on His throne, and share with Him in His glory.

Now what do the Apostles, and what does Christ Himself, in that passage that I have quoted, mean, by such solemn words as these? Some people shrink from them, and say that it is trenching upon the central doctrine of the Gospel, when we speak about drinking of the cup which Christ drank of. They ask, Can it be? Yes, it can be, if you will think thus:—If a Christian has the Spirit and life of Christ in him, his career will be moulded, imperfectly but really, by the same Spirit that dwelt in his Lord; and similar causes will produce corresponding effects. The life of Christ which—divine, pure, incapable of copy and repetition—in one aspect has ended for ever for men, remains to be lived, in another view of it, by every Christian, who in like manner has to fight with the world; who in like manner has to resist temptation; who in like manner has to stand, by God's help, pure and sinless, in so far as the new nature of him is concerned, in the midst of a world that is full of evil. For were the sufferings of the Lord only the sufferings that were wrought upon Calvary? Were the sufferings of the Lord only the sufferings which came from the contradiction of sinners against Himself? Were the sufferings of the Lord only the sufferings which were connected with His bodily afflictions and pain, precious and priceless as they were, and operative causes of our redemption as they were? Oh no. Conceive of that perfect, sinless,

really human life, in the midst of a system of things that is all full of corruption and of sin; coming ever and anon against misery, and wrong-doing, and rebellion; and ask yourselves whether part of His sufferings did not spring from the contact of the sinless Son of man with a sinful world, and the apparently vain attempt to influence and leaven that sinful world with care for itself and love for the Father. If there had been nothing more than that, yet Christ's sufferings as the Son of God in the midst of sinful men would have been deep and real. ‘O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?’ was wrung from Him by the painful sense of want of sympathy between His aims and theirs. ‘Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away and be at rest,’ must often be the language of those who are like Him in spirit, and in consequent sufferings.

And then again, another branch of the ‘sufferings of Christ’ is to be found in that deep and mysterious fact on which I durst not venture to speak beyond what the actual words of Scripture put into my lips—the fact that Christ wrought out His perfect obedience as a man, through temptation and by suffering. There was no sin *within* Him, no tendency to sin, no yielding to the evil that assailed. ‘The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.’ But yet, when that dark Power stood by His side, and said, ‘If thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down,’ it was a real temptation and not a sham

one. There was no wish to do it, no faltering for a moment, no hesitation. There was no rising up in that calm will of even a moment's impulse to do the thing that was presented;—but yet it was presented, and, when Christ triumphed, and the tempter departed for a season, there had been a temptation and there had been a conflict. And though obedience be a joy, and the doing of His Father's will was His delight, as it must needs be in pure and in purified hearts; yet obedience which is sustained in the face of temptation, and which never fails, though its path lead to bodily pains and the ‘contradiction of sinners,’ may well be called suffering. We cannot speak of our Lord's obedience as the surrender of His own will to the Father's, with the implication that these two wills ever did or could move except in harmony. There was no place in Christ's obedience for that casting out of sinful self which makes our submission a surrender joined with suffering, but He knew temptation. Flesh, and sense, and the world, and the prince of this world, presented it to Him; and therefore His obedience too was suffering, even though to do the will of His Father was His meat and His drink, His sustenance and His refreshment.

But then, let me remind you still further, that not only does the life of Christ, as sinless in the midst of sinful men, and the life of Christ, as sinless whilst yet there was temptation presented to it—assume the aspect of being a life of suffering, and become, in that respect, the model for us; but that also the Death of Christ, besides

its aspect as an atonement and sacrifice for sin, the power by which transgression is put away and God's love flows out upon our souls, has another power given to it in the teaching of the New Testament. The Death of Christ is a type of the Christian's life, which is to be one long, protracted, and daily dying to sin, to self, to the world. The crucifixion of the old manhood is to be the life's work of every Christian, through the power of faith in that Cross by which 'the world is crucified unto Me, and I unto the world.' That thought comes over and over again in all forms of earnest presentation in the Apostle's teaching. Do not slur it over as if it were a mere fanciful metaphor. It carries in its type a most solemn reality. The truth is, that, if a Christian, you have a double life. There is Christ, with His power, with His Spirit, giving you a nature which is pure and sinless, incapable of transgression, like His own. The new man, that which is born of God, sinneth not, cannot sin. But side by side with it, working through it, working in it, leavening it, indistinguishable from it to your consciousness, by anything but this that the one works righteousness and the other works transgression, there is the 'old man,' 'the flesh,' 'the old Adam,' your own godless, independent, selfish, proud being. And the one is to slay the other! Ah, let me tell you, these words—crucifying, casting out the old man, plucking out the right eye, maiming self of the right hand, mortifying the deeds of the body—they are something very much deeper and more

awful than poetical symbols and metaphors. They teach us this, that there is no growth without sore sorrow. Conflict, not progress, is the word that defines man's path from darkness into light. No holiness is won by any other means than this, that wickedness should be slain day by day, and hour by hour. In long lingering agony often, with the blood of the heart pouring out at every quivering vein, you are to cut right through the life and being of that sinful self; to do what the Word does, pierce to the dividing asunder of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and get rid by crucifying and slaying—a long process, a painful process—of your own sinful self. And not until you can stand up and say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' have you accomplished that to which you are consecrated and vowed by your sonship—'being conformed unto the likeness of His death,' and 'knowing the fellowship of His sufferings.'

It is this process, the inward strife and conflict in getting rid of evil, which the Apostle designates here with the name of 'suffering with Christ, that we may be also glorified together.' On this high level, and not upon the lower one of the consideration that Christ will help us to bear outward infirmities and afflictions, do we find the true meaning of all that Scripture teaching which says indeed, 'Yes, our sufferings are *His*'; but lays the foundation of it in this, 'His sufferings are *ours*.' It begins by telling us that Christ has done a work and borne a sorrow that no second can ever do. Then it tells us that

Christ's life of obedience—which, because it *was* a life of obedience, was a life of suffering, and brought Him into a condition of hostility to the men around Him—is to be repeated in us. It sets before us the Cross of Calvary, and the sorrows and pains that were felt there;—and it says to us, Christian men and women, if you want the power for holy living, have fellowship in that atoning death; and if you want the pattern of holy living, look at that Cross and feel, 'I am crucified to the world by it; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

Such considerations as these, however, do not necessarily exclude the other one (which we may just mention and dwell on for a moment), namely, that where there is this spiritual participation in the sufferings of Christ, and where His death is reproduced and perpetuated, as it were, in our daily mortifying ourselves in the present evil world—there Christ is with us in our afflictions. God forbid that I should try to strike away any word of consolation that has come, as these words of my text have come, to so many sorrowing hearts in all generations, like music in the night and like cold waters to a thirsty soul. We need not hold that there is no reference here to that comforting thought, 'In all our affliction He is afflicted.' Brethren, you and I have, each of us—one in one way, and one in another, all in some way, all in the right way, none in too severe a way, none in too slight a way—to tread the path of sorrow; and is it not a

blessed thing, as we go along through that dark valley of the shadow of death down into which the sunniest paths go sometimes, to come, amidst the twilight and the gathering clouds, upon tokens that Jesus has been on the road before us? They tell us that in some trackless lands, when one friend passes through the pathless forests, he breaks a twig ever and anon as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces of his having been there, and may know that they are not out of the road. Oh, when we are journeying through the murky night, and the dark woods of affliction and sorrow, it is something to find here and there a spray broken, or a leafy stem bent down with the tread of His foot and the brush of His hand as He passed, and to remember that the path He trod He has hallowed, and thus to find lingering fragrances and hidden strengths in the remembrance of Him as 'in all points tempted like as we are,' bearing grief *for* us, bearing grief *with* us, bearing grief *like* us.

Oh, do not, do not, my brethren, keep these sacred thoughts of Christ's companionship in sorrow, for the larger trials of life. If the mote in the eye be large enough to annoy you, it is large enough to bring out His sympathy; and if the grief be too small for Him to compassionate and share, it is too small for you to be troubled by it. If you are ashamed to apply that divine thought, 'Christ bears this grief with me,' to those petty molehills that you sometimes magnify into mountains, think to yourselves that then it is a

shame for you to be stumbling over them. But on the other hand, never fear to be irreverent or too familiar in the thought that Christ is willing to bear, and help you to bear, the pettiest, the minutest, and most insignificant of the daily annoyances that may come to ruffle you. Whether it be a poison from one serpent sting, or whether it be poison from a million of buzzing tiny mosquitoes, if there be a smart, go to Him, and He will help you to endure it. He will do more, He will bear it with you, for if so be that we suffer with Him, He suffers with us, and our oneness with Christ brings about a community of possessions whereby it becomes true of each trusting soul in its relations to Him, that 'all mine (joys and sorrows alike) are thine, and all thine are mine.'

II. There remain some other considerations which may be briefly stated, in order to complete the lessons of this text. In the second place, this community of suffering is a necessary preparation for the community of glory.

I name this principally for the sake of putting in a caution. The Apostle does not mean to tell us, of course, that if there were such a case as that of a man becoming a son of God, and having no occasion or opportunity afterwards, by brevity of life or other causes, for passing through the discipline of sorrow, his inheritance would be forfeited. We must always take such passages as this—which seem to make the discipline of the world an essential part of the

preparing of us for glory—in conjunction with the other undeniable truth which completes them, that when a man has the love of God in his heart, however feebly, however newly, there and then he is fit for the inheritance. I think that Christian people make vast mistakes sometimes in talking about 'being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' about being 'ripe for glory,' and the like. One thing at any rate is very certain, it is not the discipline that fits. That which fits goes before the discipline, and the discipline only develops the fitness. 'God hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' says the Apostle. That is a past act. The preparedness for heaven comes at the moment—if it be a momentary act—when a man turns to Christ. You may take the lowest and most abandoned form of human character, and in one moment (it is possible, and it is often the case) the entrance into that soul of the feeble germ of that new affection shall at once change the whole moral habitude of that man. Though it be true, then, that heaven is only open to those who are capable—by holy aspirations and divine desires—of entering into it, it is equally true that such aspirations and desires may be the work of an instant, and may be superinduced in a moment in a heart the most debased and the most degraded. 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise,'—*fit* for the inheritance!

And, therefore, let us not misunderstand such words as this text, and fancy that the necessary discipline, which we have to go through before

we are ready for heaven, is necessary in anything like the same sense in which it is necessary that a man should have faith in Christ in order to be saved. The one may be dispensed with, the other cannot. A Christian at any period of his Christian experience, if it please God to take him, is fit for the kingdom. The life *is* life, whether it be the budding beauty and feebleness of childhood, or the strength of manhood, or the maturity and calm peace of old age. But 'add to your faith,' that 'an entrance may be ministered unto you *abundantly*.' Remember that though the root of the matter, the seed of the kingdom, may be in you; and that though, therefore, you have a right to feel that, at any period of your Christian experience, if it please God to take you out of this world, you are fit for heaven—yet in His mercy He is leaving you here, training you, disciplining you, cleansing you, making you to be polished shafts in His quiver; and that all the glowing furnaces of fiery trial and all the cold waters of affliction are but the preparation through which the rough iron is to be passed before it becomes tempered steel, a shaft in the Master's hand.

And so learn to look upon all trial as being at once the seal of your sonship, and the means by which God puts it within your power to win a higher place, a loftier throne, a nobler crown, a closer fellowship with Him 'who hath suffered, being tempted,' and who will receive into His own blessedness and rest them that are tempted. 'The child, though he be an heir, differeth

nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors.' God puts us in the school of sorrow under that stern tutor and governor here, and gives us the opportunity of 'suffering with Christ,' that by the daily crucifixion of our old nature, by the lessons and blessings of outward calamities and change, there may grow up in us a still nobler and purer, and perfecter divine life; and that we may so be made capable—more capable, and capable of more—of that inheritance for which the only necessary thing is the death of Christ, and the only fitness is faith in His name.

III. Finally, that inheritance is the necessary result of the suffering that has gone before.

The suffering results from our union with Christ. That union must needs culminate in glory. It is not only because the joy hereafter seems required in order to vindicate God's love to His children, who here reap sorrow from their sonship, that the discipline of life cannot but end in blessedness. That ground of mere compensation is a low one on which to rest the certainty of future bliss. But the inheritance is sure to all who here suffer with Christ, because the one cause—union with the Lord—produces both the present result of fellowship in His sorrows, and the future result of joy in His joy, of possession of His possessions. The inheritance is sure because Christ possesses it now. The inheritance is sure because earth's sorrows not merely require to be repaid by its peace, but

because they have an evident design to fit us for it, and it would be destructive to all faith in God's wisdom, and God's knowledge of His own purposes, not to believe that what He has wrought us for will be given to us. Trials have no meaning, unless they are means to an end. The end is the inheritance, and sorrows here, as well as the Spirit's work here, are the earnest of the inheritance. Measure the greatness of the glory by what has preceded it. God takes all these years of life, and all the sore trials and afflictions that belong inevitably to an earthly career, and works them in, into the blessedness that *shall* come. If a fair measure of the greatness of any result of productive power be the length of time that was taken for getting it ready, we can dimly conceive what that joy must be for which seventy years of strife and pain and sorrow are but a momentary preparation; and what must be the weight of that glory which is the counterpoise and consequence to the afflictions of this lower world. The further the pendulum swings on the one side, the further it goes up on the other. The deeper God plunges the comet into the darkness out yonder, the closer does it come to the sun at its nearest distance, and the longer does it stand basking and glowing in the full blaze of the glory from the central orb. So in *our* revolution, the measure of the distance from the farthest point of our darkest earthly sorrow, *to* the throne, may help us to the measure of the closeness of the bright, perfect, perpetual glory above, when we

are *on* the throne: for if so be that we are sons, we *must* suffer with Him; if so be that we suffer, we *must* be glorified together!

THE REVELATION OF SONS

> 'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.'—ROMANS viii. 19.

The Apostle has been describing believers as 'sons' and 'heirs.' He drops from these transcendent heights to contrast their present apparent condition with their true character and their future glory. The sad realities of suffering darken his lofty hopes, even although these sad realities are to his faith tokens of joint-heirship with Jesus, and pledges that if our inheritance is here manifested by suffering with him, that very fact is a prophecy of common glory hereafter. He describes that future as the revealing of a glory, to which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared; and then, in our text he varies the application of that thought of revealing and thinks of the subjects of it as being the 'sons of God.' They will be revealed when the glory which they have as joint-heirs with Christ is revealed in them. They walk, as it were, compassed with mist and cloud, but the splendour which will fall on them will scatter the envious darkness, and 'when Christ

who is our life shall appear, then shall His co-heirs also appear with Him in glory.'

We may consider—

I. The present veil over the sons of God.

There is always a difference between appearance and reality, between the ideal and its embodiments. For all men it is true that the full expression of oneself is impossible. Each man's deeds fall short of disclosing the essential self in the man. Every will is hampered by the fleshly screen of the body. 'I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me,' is the yearning of every heart that is deeply moved. Contending principles successively sway every personality and thwart each other's expression. For these, and many other reasons, the sum-total of every life is but a shrouded representation of the man who lives it; and we, all of us, after all efforts at self-revelation, remain mysteries to our fellows and to ourselves. All this is eminently true of the sons of God. They have a life-germ hidden in their souls, which in its very nature is destined to fill and expand their whole being, and to permeate with its triumphant energy every corner of their nature. But it is weak and often overborne by its opposite. The seed sown is to grow in spite of bad weather and a poor soil and many weeds, and though it is destined to overcome all these, it may to-day only be able to show on the surface a little patch of pale and struggling

growth. When we think of the cost at which the life of Christ was imparted to men, and of the divine source from which it comes, and of the sedulous and protracted discipline through which it is being trained, we cannot but conclude that nothing short of its universal dominion over all the faculties of its imperfect possessors can be the goal of its working. Hercules in his cradle is still Hercules, and strangles snakes. Frost and sun may struggle in midwinter, and the cold may seem to predominate, but the sun is steadily enlarging its course in the sky, and increasing the fervour of its beams, and midsummer day is as sure to dawn as the shortest day was.

The sons of God, even more truly than other men, have contending principles fighting within them. It was the same Apostle who with oaths denied that he ‘knew the man,’ and in a passion of clinging love and penitence fell at His feet; but for the mere onlooker it would be hard to say which was the true man and which would conquer. The sons of God, like other men, have to express themselves in words which are never closely enough fitted to their thoughts and feelings. David's penitence has to be contented with groans which are not deep enough; and John's calm raptures on his Saviour's breast can only be spoken by shut eyes and silence. The sons of God never fully correspond to their character, but always fall somewhat beneath their desire, and must always be somewhat less than their intention. The artist never wholly

embodies his conception. It is only God who ‘rests from His works’ because the works fully embody His creative design and fully receive the benediction of His own satisfaction with them.

From all such thoughts there arises a piece of plain practical wisdom, which warns Christian men not to despond or despair if they do not find themselves living up to their ideal. The sons of God are ‘veiled’ because the world's estimate of them is untrue. The old commonplace that the world knows nothing of its greatest men is verified in the opinions which it holds about the sons of God. It is not for their Christianity that they get any of the world's honours and encomiums, if such fall to their share. They are *un*known and yet *well*-known. They live for the most part veiled in obscurity. ‘The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.’ They are God's hidden ones. If they are wise, they will look for no recognition nor eulogy from the world, and will be content to live, as unknown by the princes of this world as was the Lord of glory, whom they slew because their dim eyes could not see the flashing of the glory ‘through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.’ But no consciousness of imperfection in our revelation of an indwelling Christ must ever be allowed to diminish our efforts to live out the life that is in us, and to shine as lights in the world; nor must the consciousness that we walk as ‘veiled,’ lead us to add to the thick folds the criminal one of voluntary silence and cowardly hiding in dumb hearts the secret of our lives.

II. The unveiling of the sons of God.

That unveiling is in the text represented as coming along with the glory which shall be revealed to usward, and as being contemporaneous with the deliverance of the creation itself from the bondage of corruption, and its passing into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. It coincides with the vanishing of the pain in which the whole creation now groans and travails, and with the adoption—that is, the redemption of our body. Then hope will be seen and will pass into still fruition. All this points to the time when Jesus Christ is revealed, and His servants are revealed with Him in glory. That revelation brings with it of necessity the manifestation of the sons of God for what they are—the making visible in the life of what God sees them to be.

That revelation of the sons of God is the result of the entire dominion and transforming supremacy of the Spirit of God in them. In the whole sweep of their consciousness there will in that day be nothing done from other motives; there will be no sidelights flashing in and disturbing the perfect illumination from the candle of the Lord set on high in their being; there will be no contradictions in the life. It will be one and simple, and therefore perfectly intelligible. Such is the destined issue of the most imperfect Christian life. The Christian man who has in his experience to-day the faintest and most interrupted operation of the spirit of life in

Christ Jesus has therein a pledge of immortality, because nothing short of an endless life of progressive and growing purity will be adequate to receive and exemplify the power which can never terminate until it is made like Him and perfectly seeing Him as He is.

But that unveiling further guarantees the possession of fully adequate means of expression. The limitations and imperfections of our present bodily life will all drop away in putting on ‘the body of glory’ which shall be ours. The new tongue will perfectly utter the new knowledge and rapture of the new life; new hands will perfectly realise our ideals; and on every forehead will be stamped Christ's new name.

That unveiling will be further realised by a divine act indicating the characters of the sons of God by their position. Earth's judgments will be reversed by that divine voice, and the great promise, which through weary ages has shone as a far-off star,—‘I will set him on high because he hath known my name’—will then be known for the sun near at hand. Many names loudly blown through the world's trumpet will fall silent then. Many stars will be quenched, but ‘they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.’

That revelation will be more surprising to no one than to those who are its subjects, when they see themselves mirrored in that glass, and

so unlike what they are here. Their first impulse will be to wonder at the form they see, and to ask, almost with incredulity, ‘Lord, is it I?’ Nor will the wonder be less when they recognise many whom they knew not. The surprises when the family of God is gathered together at last will be great. The Israel of Captivity lifts up her wondering eyes as she sees the multitudes flocking to her side as the doves to their windows, and, half-ashamed of her own narrow vision, exclaims, ‘I was left alone; these, where had they been?’ Let us rejoice that in the day when the sons of God are revealed, many hidden ones from many dark corners will sit at the Father's table. That revelation will be made to the whole universe; we know not how, but we know that it shall be; and, as the text tells us, that revelation of the sons of God is the hope for which ‘the earnest expectation of the creature waits’ through the weary ages.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE BODY

> ‘The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.’—ROMANS viii. 23.

In a previous verse Paul has said that all true Christians have received ‘the Spirit of adoption.’ They become sons of God through Christ the Son. They receive a new spiritual and divine life from God through Christ, and that life is like its

source. In so far as that new life vitalises and dominates their nature, believers have received ‘the Spirit of adoption,’ and by it they cry ‘Abba, Father.’ But the body still remains a source of weakness, the seat of sin. It is sluggish and inapt for high purposes; it still remains subject to ‘the law of sin and death’; and so is not like the Father who breathed into it the breath of life. It remains in bondage, and has not yet received the adoption. This text, in harmony with the Apostle's whole teaching, looks forward to a change in the body and in its relations to the renewed spirit, as the crown and climax of the work of redemption, and declares that till that change is effected, the condition of Christian men is imperfect, and is a waiting, and often a groaning.

In dealing with some of the thoughts that arise from this text, we note—

I. That a future bodily life is needed in order to give definiteness and solidity to the conception of immortality.

Before the Gospel came men's belief in a future life was vague and powerless, mainly because it had no Gospel of the Resurrection, and so nothing tangible to lay hold on. The Gospel has made the belief in a future state infinitely easier and more powerful, mainly because of the emphasis with which it has proclaimed an actual resurrection and a future bodily life. Its great proof of immortality is

drawn, not merely from ethical considerations of the manifest futility of earthly life which has no sequel beyond the grave, nor from the intuitions and longings of men's souls, but from the historical fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of His Ascension in bodily form into heaven. It proclaims these two facts as parts of His experience, and asserts that when He rose from the dead and ascended up on high, He did so as ‘the first-born among many brethren,’ their forerunner and their pattern. It is this which gives the Gospel its power, and thus transforms a vague and shadowy conception of immortality into a solid faith, for which we have already an historical guarantee. Stupendous mysteries still veil the nature of the resurrection process, though these are exaggerated into inconceivabilities by false notions of what constitutes personal identity; but if the choice lies between accepting the Christian doctrine of a resurrection and the conception of a finite spirit disembodied and yet active, there can be no doubt as to which of these two is the more reasonable and thinkable. Body, soul, and spirit make the complete triune man.

The thought of the future life as a bodily life satisfies the longings of the heart. Much natural shrinking from death comes from unwillingness to part company with an old companion and friend. As Paul puts it in 2nd Corinthians, ‘Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.’ All thoughts of the future which do not give prominence to the idea of a bodily life open

up but a ghastly and uninviting mode of existence, which cannot but repel those who are accustomed to the fellowship of their bodies, and they feel that they cannot think of themselves as deprived of that which was their servant and instrument, through all the years of their earthly consciousness.

II. 'The body that shall be' is an emancipated body.

The varied gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon the Christian Church served to quicken the hope of the yet greater gifts of that indwelling Spirit which were yet to come. Chief amongst these our text considers the transformation of the earthly into a spiritual body. This transformation our text regards as being the participation by the body in the redemption by which Christ has bought us with the great price of His blood. We have to interpret the language here in the light of the further teaching of Paul in the great Resurrection chapter of 1st Corinthians, which distinctly lays stress, not on the identity of the corporeal frame which is laid in the grave with 'the body of glory,' but upon the entire contrast between the 'natural body,' which is fit organ for the lower nature, and is informed by it, and the 'spiritual body,' which is fit organ for the spirit. We have to interpret 'the resurrection of the body' by the definite apostolic declaration, 'Thou sowest not that body that shall be... but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him'; and we have to give full weight to the contrasts

which the Apostle draws between the characteristics of that which is ‘sown’ and of that which is ‘raised.’ The one is ‘sown in corruption and raised in incorruption.’ Natural decay is contrasted with immortal youth. The one is ‘sown in dishonour,’ the other is ‘raised in glory.’ That contrast is ethical, and refers either to the subordinate position of the body here in relation to the spirit, or to the natural sense of shame, or to the ideas of degradation which are attached to the indulgence of the appetites. The one is ‘sown in weakness,’ the other is ‘raised in power’; the one is ‘sown a natural body,’ the other is ‘raised a spiritual body.’ Is not Paul in this whole series of contrasts thinking primarily of the vision which he saw on the road to Damascus when the risen Christ appeared before him? And had not the years which had passed since then taught him to see in the ascended Christ the prophecy and the pattern of what His servants should become? We have further to keep in view Paul's other representation in 2nd Corinthians v., where he strongly puts the contrast between the corporeal environment of earth and ‘the body of glory,’ which belongs to the future life, in his two images: ‘the earthly house of this tabernacle’—a clay hut which lasts but for a time,—and ‘the building of God, the house not made with hands and eternal.’ The body is an occasion of separation from the Lord.

These considerations may well lead us to, at least, general outlines on which a confident and peaceful hope may fix. For example, they lead us

to the thought that that redeemed body is no more subject to decay and death, is no more weighed upon by weakness and weariness, has no work beyond its strength, needs no sustenance by food, and no refreshment of sleep. ‘The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,’ suggests strength constantly communicated by a direct divine gift. And from all these negative characteristics there follows that there will be in that future bodily life no epochs of age marked by bodily changes. The two young men who were seen sitting in the sepulchre of Jesus had lived before Adam, and would seem as young if we saw them to-day.

Similarly the redeemed body will be a more perfect instrument for communication with the external universe. We know that the present body conditions our knowledge, and that our senses do not take cognisance of all the qualities of material things. Microscopes and telescopes have enlarged our field of vision, and have brought the infinitely small and the infinitely distant within our range. Our ear hears vibrations at a certain rate per second, and no doubt if it were more delicately organised we could hear sounds where now is silence. Sometimes the creatures whom we call ‘inferior’ seem to have senses that apprehend much of which we are not aware. Balaam's ass saw the obstructing angel before Balaam did. Nor is there any reason to suppose that all the powers of the mind find tools to work with in the body. It is possible that that body which is the fit

instrument of the spirit may become its means of knowing more deeply, thinking more wisely, understanding more swiftly, comprehending more widely, remembering more firmly and judging more soundly. It is possible that the contrast between then and now may be like the contrast between telegraph and slow messenger in regard to the rapidity, between photograph and poor daub in regard to the truthfulness, between a full-orbed circle and a fragmentary arc in regard to the completeness of the messages which the body brings to the indwelling self.

But, once more, the body unredeemed has appetites and desires which may lead to their own satisfaction, which do lead to sordid cares and weary toil. ‘The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.’ The redeemed body will have in it nothing to tempt and nothing to clog, but will be a helper to the spirit and a source of strength. Glorious work of God as the body is, it has its weaknesses, its limitations, and its tendencies to evil. We must not be tempted into brooding over unanswered questions as to ‘How do the dead rise, and with what body do they come?’ But we can lift our eyes to the mountain-top where Jesus went up to pray. ‘And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling’; and He was capable of entering into the Shekinah cloud and holding fellowship therein with the Father, who attested His Sonship and bade us listen to His voice. And

we can look to Olivet and follow the ascending Jesus as He lets His benediction drop on the upturned faces of His friends, until He again passes into the Shekinah cloud, and leaving the world, goes to the Father. And from both His momentary transfiguration and His permanent Ascension we can draw the certain assurance that 'He shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.'

III. The redeemed body is a consequence of Christ's indwelling Spirit.

It is no natural result of death or resurrection, but is the outcome of the process begun on earth, by which, 'through faith and the righteousness of faith,' the spirit is life. The context distinctly enforces this view by its double use of 'adoption,' which in one aspect has already been received, and is manifested by the fact that 'now are we the sons of God,' and in another aspect is still 'waited' for. The Christian man in his regenerated spirit has been born again; the Christian man still waits for the completion of that sonship in a time when the regenerated spirit will no longer dwell in the clay cottage of 'this tabernacle,' but will inhabit a congruous dwelling in 'the building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'

Scripture is too healthy and comprehensive to

be contented with a merely spiritual regeneration, and is withal too spiritual to be satisfied with a merely material heaven. It gives full place to both elements, and yet decisively puts all belonging to the latter second. It lays down the laws that for a complete humanity there must be body as well as spirit; that there must be a correspondence between the two, and as is the spirit so must the body be, and further, that the process must begin at the centre and work outwards, so that the spirit must first be transformed, and then the body must be participant of the transformation.

All that Scripture says about ‘rising in glory’ is said about believers. It is represented as a spiritual process. They who have the Spirit of God in their spirits because they have it receive the glorified body which is like their Saviour's. It is not enough to die in order to ‘rise glorious.’ ‘If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.’ The resurrection is promised for all mankind, but it may be a resurrection in which there shall be endless living and no glory, nor any beauty and no blessedness. But the body may be ‘sown in weakness,’ and in weakness raised; it may be ‘sown in dishonour’ and in dishonour raised; it may be sown dead, and raised a living death. ‘Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’ Does that

mean nothing? 'They that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.' Does that mean nothing? There are dark mysteries in these and similar words of Scripture which should make us all pause and solemnly reflect. The sole way which leads to the resurrection of glory is the way of faith in Jesus Christ. If we yield ourselves to Him, He will plant His Spirit in our spirits, will guide and growingly sanctify us through life, will deliver us by the indwelling of the Spirit of life in Him from the law of sin and death. Nor will His transforming power cease till it has pervaded our whole being with its fiery energy, and we stand at the last men like Christ, redeemed in body, soul, and spirit, 'according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.'

THE INTERCEDING SPIRIT

> 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'—ROMANS viii. 26.

Pentecost was a transitory sign of a perpetual gift. The tongues of fire and the rushing mighty wind, which were at first the most conspicuous results of the gifts of the Spirit, tongues, and prophecies, and gifts of healing, which were to the early Church itself and to onlookers palpable demonstrations of an indwelling power, were little more lasting than the fire and the wind.

Does anything remain? This whole great chapter is Paul's triumphant answer to such a question. The Spirit of God dwells in every believer as the source of his true life, is for him ‘the Spirit of adoption’ and witnesses with his spirit that he is a child of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. Not only does that Spirit co-operate with the human spirit in this witness-bearing, but the verse, of which our text is a part, points to another form of co-operation: for the word rendered in the earlier part of the verse ‘helpeth’ in the original suggests more distinctly that the Spirit of God in His intercession for us works in association with us.

First, then—

I. The Spirit's intercession is not carried on apart from us.

Much modern hymnology goes wrong in this point, that it represents the Spirit's intercession as presented in heaven rather than as taking place within the personal being of the believer. There is a broad distinction carefully observed throughout Scripture between the representations of the work of Christ and that of the Spirit of Christ. The former in its character and revelation and attainment was wrought upon earth, and in its character of intercession and bestowment of blessings is discharged at the right hand of God in heaven; the whole of the Spirit's work, on the other hand, is wrought in human spirits here. The context speaks of

intercession expressed in ‘groanings which cannot be uttered,’ and which, unexpressed though they are, are fully understood ‘by Him who searches the heart.’ Plainly, therefore, these groanings come from human hearts, and as plainly are the Divine Spirit's voicing them.

II. The Spirit's intercession in our spirits consists in our own divinely-inspired longings.

The Apostle has just been speaking of another groaning within ourselves, which is the expression of ‘the earnest expectation’ of ‘the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body’; and he says that that longing will be the more patient the more it is full of hope. This, then, is Paul's conception of the normal attitude of a Christian soul; but that attitude is hard to keep up in one's own strength, because of the distractions of time and sense which are ever tending to disturb the continuity and fixity of that onward look, and to lead us rather to be satisfied with the gross, dull present. That redemption of the body, with all which it implies and includes, ought to be the supreme object to which each Christian heart should ever be turning, and Christian prayers should be directed. But our own daily experience makes us only too sure that such elevation above, and remoteness from earthly thoughts, with all their pettinesses and limitations, is impossible for us in our own strength. As Paul puts it here, ‘We know not what to pray for’; nor can we fix and focus our desires, nor present them ‘as we

ought.' It is to this weakness and incompleteness of our desires and prayers that the help of the Spirit is directed. He strengthens our longings by His own direct operation. The more vivid our anticipations and the more steadfast our hopes, and the more our spirits reach out to that future redemption, the more are we bound to discern something more than human imaginings in them, and to be sure that such visions are too good not to be true, too solid to be only the play of our own fancy. The more we are conscious of these experiences as our own, the more certain we shall be that in them it is not we that speak, but 'the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in us.'

III. These divinely-inspired longings are incapable of full expression.

They are shallow feelings that can be spoken. Language breaks down in the attempt to express our deepest emotions and our truest love. For all the deepest things in man, inarticulate utterance is the most self-revealing. Grief can say more in a sob and a tear than in many weak words; love finds its tongue in the light of an eye and the clasp of a hand. The groanings which rise from the depths of the Christian soul cannot be forced into the narrow frame-work of human language; and just because they are unutterable are to be recognised as the voice of the Holy Spirit.

But where amidst the Christian experience of to-day shall we find anything in the least like these unutterable longings after the redemption

of the body which Paul here takes it for granted are the experience of all Christians? There is no more startling condemnation of the average Christianity of our times than the calm certainty with which through all this epistle the Apostle takes it for granted that the experience of the Roman Christians will universally endorse his statements. Look for a moment at what these statements are. Listen to the briefest summary of them: 'We cry, Abba, Father'; 'We are children of God'; 'We suffer with Him that we may be glorified with Him'; 'Glory shall be revealed to usward'; 'We have the first-fruits of the Spirit'; 'We ourselves groan within ourselves'; 'By hope were we saved'; 'We hope for that which we see not'; 'Then do we with patience wait for it'; 'We know that to them that love God all things work together for good'; 'In all these things we are more than conquerors'; 'Neither death nor life... nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God.' He believed that in these rapturous and triumphant words he was gathering together the experience of every Roman Christian, and would evoke from their lips a confident 'Amen.' Where are the communities to-day in whose hearing these words could be reiterated with the like assurance? How few among us there are who know anything of these 'groanings which cannot be uttered!' How few among us there are whose spirits are stretching out eager desires towards the land of perpetual summer, like migratory birds in northern latitudes when the autumn

days are shortening and the temperature is falling!

But, however we must feel that our poor experience falls far short of the ideal in our text, an ideal which was to some extent realised in the early Christian Church, we must beware of taking the imperfections of our experience as any evidence of the unreality of our Christianity. They are a proof that we have limited and impeded the operation of the Spirit within us. They teach us that He will not intercede ‘with groanings which cannot be uttered’ unless we let Him speak through our voices. Therefore, if we find that in our own consciousness there is little to correspond to those unuttered groanings, we should take the warning: ‘Quench not the Spirit.’ ‘Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.’

IV. The unuttered longings are sure to be answered.

He that searcheth the heart knows the meaning of the Spirit's unspoken prayers; and looking into the depths of the human spirit interprets its longings, discriminating between the mere human and partial expression and the divinely-inspired desire which may be unexpressed. If our prayers are weak, they are answered in the measure in which they embody in them, though perhaps mistaken by us, a divine longing. Apparent disappointment of our petitions may be real answers to our real prayer.

It was because Jesus loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus that He abode still in the same place where He was, to let Lazarus die that He might be raised again. That was the true answer to the sisters' hope of His immediate coming. God's way of giving to us is to breathe within us a desire, and then to answer the desire inbreathed. So, longing is the prophecy of fulfilment when it is longing according to the will of God. They who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' may ever be sure that their bread shall be given them, and their water will be made sure. The true object of our desires is often not clear to us, and so we err in translating it into words. Let us be thankful that we pray to a God who can discern the prayer within the prayer, and often gives the substance of our petitions in the very act of refusing their form.

THE GIFT THAT BRINGS ALL GIFTS

> 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'—ROMANS viii. 32.

We have here an allusion to, if not a distinct quotation from, the narrative in Genesis, of Abraham's offering up of Isaac. The same word

which is employed in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, to translate the Hebrew word rendered in our Bible as ‘withheld,’ is employed here by the Apostle. And there is evidently floating before his mind the thought that, in some profound and real sense, there is an analogy between that wondrous and faithful act of giving up and the transcendent and stupendous gift to the world, from God, of His Son.

If we take that point of view, the language of my text rises into singular force, and suggests many very deep thoughts, about which, perhaps, silence is best. But led by that analogy, let us deal with these words.

I. Consider this mysterious act of divine surrender.

The analogy seems to suggest to us, strange as it may be, and remote from the cold and abstract ideas of the divine nature which it is thought to be philosophical to cherish, that something corresponding to the pain and loss that shadowed the patriarch's heart flitted across the divine mind when the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Not merely to give, but to give up, is the highest crown and glory of love, as we know it. And who shall venture to say that we so fully apprehend the divine nature as to be warranted in declaring that some analogy to that is impossible for Him? Our language is, ‘I will not offer unto God that which

doth cost me nothing.' Let us bow in silence before the dim intimation that seems to flicker out of the words of my text, that so He says to us, 'I will not offer unto you that which doth cost Me nothing.' 'He *spared* not His own Son'; withheld Him not from us.

But passing from that which, I dare say, many of you may suppose to be fanciful and unwarranted, let us come upon the surer ground of the other words of my text. And notice how the reality of the surrender is emphasised by the closeness of the bond which, in the mysterious eternity, knits together the Father and the Son. As with Abraham, so in this lofty example, of which Abraham and Isaac were but as dim, wavering reflections in water, the Son is His own Son. It seems to me impossible, upon any fair interpretation of the words before us, to refrain from giving to that epithet here its very highest and most mysterious sense. It cannot be any mere equivalent for Messiah, it cannot merely mean a man who was like God in purity of nature and in closeness of communion. For the force of the analogy and the emphasis of that word which is even more emphatic in the Greek than in the English 'His *own* Son,' point to a community of nature, to a uniqueness and singleness of relation, to a closeness of intimacy, to which no other is a parallel. And so we have to estimate the measure of the surrender by the tenderness and awfulness of the bond. 'Having one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him.'

Notice, again, how the greatness of the surrender is made more emphatic by the contemplation of it in its double negative and positive aspect, in the two successive clauses. 'He spared not His Son, but delivered Him up,' an absolute, positive giving of Him over to the humiliation of the life and to the mystery of the death.

And notice how the tenderness and the beneficence that were the sole motive of the surrender are lifted into light in the last words, 'for us all.' The single, sole reason that bowed, if I may so say, the divine purpose, and determined the mysterious act, was a pure desire for our blessing. No definition is given as to the manner in which that surrender wrought for our good. The Apostle does not need to dwell upon that. His purpose is to emphasise the entire unselfishness, the utter simplicity of the motive which moved the divine will. One great throb of love to the whole of humanity led to that transcendent surrender, before which we can only bow and say, 'Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.'

And now, notice how this mysterious act is grasped by the Apostle here as what I may call the illuminating fact as to the whole divine nature. From it, and from it alone, there falls a blaze of light on the deepest things in God. We are accustomed to speak of Christ's perfect life of unselfishness, and His death of pure beneficence, as being the great manifestation to us all that in

His heart there is an infinite fountain of love to us. We are, further, accustomed to speak of Christ's mission and death as being the revelation to us of the love of God as well as of the Man Christ Jesus, because we believe that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world,' and that He has so manifested and revealed the very nature of divinity to us, in His life and in His person, that, as He Himself says, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' And every conclusion that we draw as to the love of Christ is, *ipso facto*, a conclusion as to the love of God. But my text looks at the matter from rather a different point of view, and bids us see, in Christ's mission and sacrifice, the great demonstration of the love of God, not only because 'God was in Christ,' but because the Father's will, conceived of as distinct from, and yet harmonious with, the will of the Son, gives Him up for us. And we have to say, not only that we see the love of God in the love of Christ, but 'God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son' that we might have life through Him.

These various phases of the love of Christ as manifesting the divine love, may not be capable of perfect harmonising in our thoughts, but they do blend into one, and by reason of them all, 'God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' We have to think not only of Abraham who gave up, but of the unresisting, innocent Isaac, bearing on his shoulders the wood for the burnt

offering, as the Christ bore the Cross on His, and suffering himself to be bound upon the pile, not only by the cords that tied his limbs, but by the cords of obedience and submission, and in both we have to bow before the Apocalypse of divine love.

II. So, secondly, look at the power of this divine surrender to bring with it all other gifts.

‘How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’ The Apostle's triumphant question requires for its affirmative answer only the belief in the unchangeableness of the Divine heart, and the uniformity of the Divine purpose. And if these be recognised, their conclusion inevitably follows. ‘With Him He will freely give us all things.’

It is so, because the greater gift implies the less. We do not expect that a man who hands over a million of pounds to another, to help him, will stick at a farthing afterwards. If you give a diamond you may well give a box to keep it in. In God's gift the lesser will follow the lead of the greater; and whatsoever a man can want, it is a smaller thing for Him to bestow, than was the gift of His Son.

There is a beautiful contrast between the manners of giving the two sets of gifts implied in words of the original, perhaps scarcely capable of being reproduced in any translation. The expression that is rendered ‘freely give,’ implies that there is a grace and a pleasantness in the

act of bestowal. God gave in Christ, what we may reverently say it was something like pain to give. Will He not give the lesser, whatever they may be, which it is the joy of His heart to communicate? The greater implies the less.

Farther, this one great gift draws all other gifts after it, because the purpose of the greater gift cannot be attained without the bestowment of the lesser. He does not begin to build being unable to finish; He does not miscalculate His resources, nor stultify Himself by commencing upon a large scale, and having to stop short before the purpose with which He began is accomplished. Men build great palaces, and are bankrupt before the roof is put on. God lays His plans with the knowledge of His powers, and having first of all bestowed this large gift, is not going to have it bestowed in vain for want of some smaller ones to follow it up. Christ puts the same argument to us, beginning only at the other end of the process. Paul says, ‘God has laid the foundation in Christ.’ Do you think He will stop before the headstone is put on? Christ said, ‘It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.’ Do you think He will not give you bread and water on the road to it? Will He send out His soldiers half-equipped; will it be found when they are on their march that they have been started with a defective commissariat, and with insufficient trenching tools? Shall the children of the King, on the road to their thrones, be left to scramble along anyhow, in want of what they need to get there? That is not

God's way of doing. He that hath begun a good work will also perfect the same, and when He gave to you and me His Son, He bound Himself to give us every subsidiary and secondary blessing which was needed to make that Son's work complete in each of us.

Again, this great blessing draws after it, by necessary consequence, all other lesser and secondary gifts, inasmuch as, in every real sense, everything is included and possessed in the Christ when we receive Him. ‘With Him,’ says Paul, as if that gift once laid in a man's heart actually enclosed within it, and had for its indispensable accompaniment the possession of every smaller thing that a man can need, Jesus Christ is, as it were, a great Cornucopia, a horn of abundance, out of which will pour, with magic affluence, all manner of supplies according as we require. This fountain flows with milk, wine, and water, as men need. Everything is given us when Christ is given to us, because Christ is the Heir of all things, and we possess all things in Him; as some poor village maiden married to a prince in disguise, who, on the morrow of her wedding finds that she is lady of broad lands, and mistress of a kingdom. ‘He that spared not His own Son,’ not only ‘with Him will give,’ but in Him has ‘given us all things.’

And so, brethren, just as that great gift is the illuminating fact in reference to the divine heart, so is it the interpreting fact in reference to the

divine dealings. Only when we keep firm hold of Christ as the gift of God, and the Explainer of all that God does, can we face the darkness, the perplexities, the torturing questions that from the beginning have harassed men's minds as they looked upon the mysteries of human misery. If we recognise that God has given us His Son, then all things become, if not plain, at least lighted with some gleam from that great gift; and we feel that the surrender of Christ is the constraining fact which shapes after its own likeness, and for its own purpose, all the rest of God's dealings with men. That gift makes anything believable, reasonable, possible, rather than that He should spare not His own Son, and then should counterwork His own act by sending the world anything but good.

III. And now, lastly, take one or two practical issues from these thoughts, in reference to our own belief and conduct.

First, I would say, Let us correct our estimates of the relative importance of the two sets of gifts. On the one side stands the solitary Christ; on the other side are massed all delights of sense, all blessings of time, all the things that the vulgar estimation of men unanimously recognises to be good. These are only makeweights. They are all lumped together into an ‘also.’ They are but the golden dust that may be filed off from the great ingot and solid block. They are but the outward tokens of His far deeper and true preciousness. They are

secondary; He is the primary. What an inversion of our notions of good! Do *you* degrade all the world's wealth, pleasantness, ease, prosperity, into an ‘also?’ Are you content to put it in the secondary place, as a result, if it please Him, of Christ? Do you live as if you did? Which do you hunger for most? Which do you labour for hardest? ‘Seek ye first the Kingdom and the King, and all ‘these things shall be added unto you.’

Let these thoughts teach us that sorrow too is one of the gifts of the Christ. The words of my text, at first sight, might seem to be simply a promise of abundant earthly good. But look what lies close beside them, and is even part of the same triumphant burst. ‘Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?’ These are some of the ‘all things’ which Paul expected that God would give him and his brethren. And looking upon all, he says, ‘They all work together for good'; and in them all we may be more than conquerors. It would be a poor, shabby issue of such a great gift as that of which we have been speaking, if it were only to be followed by the sweetnesses and prosperity and wealth of this world. But here is the point that we have to keep hold of—inasmuch as He gives us all things, let us take all the things that come to us as being as distinctly the gifts of His love, as is the gift of Christ Himself. A wise physician, to an ignorant onlooker, might seem to be acting in contradictory fashions when in the one moment

he slashes into a limb, with a sharp, gleaming knife, and in the next sedulously binds the wounds, and closes the arteries, but the purpose of both acts is one.

The diurnal revolution of the earth brings the joyful sunrise and the pathetic sunset. The same annual revolution whirls us through the balmy summer days and the biting winter ones. God's purpose is one. His methods vary. The road goes straight to its goal; but it sometimes runs in tunnels dank and dark and stifling, and sometimes by sunny glades and through green pastures. God's purpose is always love, brother. His withdrawals are gifts, and sorrow is not the least of the benefits which come to us through the Man of Sorrows.

So again, let these thoughts teach us to live by a very quiet and peaceful faith. We find it a great deal easier to trust God for Heaven than for earth—for the distant blessings than for the near ones. Many a man will venture his soul into God's hands, who would hesitate to venture to-morrow's food there. Why? Is it not because we do not really trust Him for the greater that we find it so hard to trust Him for the less? Is it not because we want the less more really than we want the greater, that we can put ourselves off with faith for the one, and want something more solid to grasp for the other? Live in the calm confidence that God gives all things; and gives us for to-morrow as for eternity; for earth as for heaven.

And, last of all, make you quite sure that you have taken *the* great gift of God. He gives it to all the world, but they only have it who accept it by faith. Have you, my brother? I look out upon the lives of the mass of professing Christians; and this question weighs on my heart, judging by conduct—have they really got Christ for their own? 'Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' Look how you are all fighting and scrambling, and sweating and fretting, to get hold of the goods of this present life, and here is a gift gleaming before you all the while that you will not condescend to take. Like a man standing in a market-place offering sovereigns for nothing, which nobody accepts because they think the offer is too good to be true, so God complains and wails: I have stretched out My hands all the day, laden with gifts, and no man regarded.

'It is only heaven may be had for the asking;
It is only God that is given away.'

He gives His Son. Take Him by humble faith in His sacrifice and Spirit; take Him, and with Him He freely gives you all things.

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that

loved us.'—ROMANS viii. 37.

In order to understand and feel the full force of this triumphant saying of the Apostle, we must observe that it is a negative answer to the preceding questions, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' A heterogeneous mass the Apostle here brigades together as an antagonistic army. They are alike in nothing except that they are all evils. There is no attempt at an exhaustive enumeration, or at classification. He clashes down, as it were, a miscellaneous mass of evil things, and then triumphs over them, and all the genus to which they belong, as being utterly impotent to drag men away from Jesus Christ. To ask the question is to answer it, but the form of the answer is worth notice. Instead of directly replying, 'No! no such powerless things as these can separate us from the love of Christ,' he says, 'No! In all these things, whilst weltering amongst them, whilst ringed round about by them, as by encircling enemies, "we are more than conquerors."' Thereby, he suggests that there is something needing to be done by us, in order that the foes may not exercise their natural effect. And so, taking the words of my text in connection with that to which they are an answer, we have three things—the impotent enemies of love; the abundant victory of love; 'We are more than conquerors'; and the love that makes us victorious. Let us look then at these

three things briefly.

I. First of all, the impotent enemies of love.

There is contempt in the careless massing together of the foes which the Apostle enumerates. He begins with the widest word that covers everything—'affliction.' Then he specifies various forms of it—'distress,' *straitening*, as the word might be rendered, then he comes to evils inflicted for Christ's sake by hostile men—'persecution,' then he names purely physical evils, 'hunger' and 'nakedness,' then he harks back again to man's antagonism, 'peril,' and 'sword.' And thus carelessly, and without an effort at logical order, he throws together, as specimens of their class, these salient points, as it were, and crests of the great sea, whose billows threaten to roll over us; and he laughs at them all, as impotent and nought, when compared with the love of Christ, which shields us from them all.

Now it must be noticed that here, in his triumphant question, the Apostle means not our love to Christ but His to us; and not even our sense of that love, but the fact itself. And his question is just this:—Is there any evil in the world that can make Christ stop loving a man that cleaves to Him? And, as I said, to ask the question is to answer it. The two things belong to two different regions. They have nothing in common. The one moves amongst the low levels of earth; the other dwells up amidst the abysses

of eternity, and to suppose that anything that assails and afflicts us here has any effect in making that great heart cease to love us is to fancy that the mists can quench the sunlight, is to suppose that that which lies down low in the earth can rise to poison and to darken the heavens.

There is no need, in order to rise to the full height of the Christian contempt for calamity, to deny any of its terrible power. These things can separate us from much. They can separate us from joy, from hope, from almost all that makes life desirable. They can strip us to the very quick, but the quick they cannot touch. The frost comes and kills the flowers, browns the leaves, cuts off the stems, binds the sweet music of the flowing rivers in silent chains, casts mists and darkness over the face of the solitary grey world, but it does not touch the life that is in the root.

And so all these outward sorrows that have power over the whole of the outward life, and can slay joy and all but stifle hope, and can ban men into irrevocable darkness and unalleviated solitude, they do not touch in the smallest degree the secret bond that binds the heart to Jesus, nor in any measure affect the flow of His love to us. Therefore we may front them and smile at them and say:

'Do as thou wilt, devouring time,
With this wide world, and all its fading swee

‘my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the

strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

You need not be very much afraid of anything being taken from you as long as Christ is left you. You will not be altogether hopeless so long as Christ, who is our hope, still speaks His faithful promises to you, nor will the world be lonely and dark to them who feel that they are lapt in the sweet and all-pervading consciousness of the changeless love of the heart of Christ. 'Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution?'—in any of these things, 'we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' Brethren, that is the Christian way of looking at all externals, not only at the dark and the sorrowful, but at the bright and the gladsome. If the withdrawal of external blessings does not touch the central sanctities and sweetness of a life in communion with Jesus, the bestowal of external blessedness does not much brighten or gladden it. We can face the withdrawal of them all, we need not covet the possession of them all, for we have all in Christ; and the world without His love contributes less to our blessedness and our peace than the absence of all its joys with His love does. So let us feel that earth, in its givings and in its withholdings, is equally impotent to touch the one thing that we need, the conscious possession of the love of Christ.

All these foes, as I have said, have no power over the fact of Christ's love to us, but they have power, and a very terrible power, over our

consciousness of that love; and we may so kick against the pricks as to lose, in the pain of our sorrows, the assurance of His presence, or be so fascinated by the false and vulgar sweetnesses and promises of the world as, in the eagerness of our chase after them, to lose our sense of the all-sufficing certitude of His love. Tribulation does not strip us of His love, but tribulation may so darken our perceptions that we cannot see the sun. Joys need not rob us of His heart, but joys may so fill ours, as that there shall be no longing for His presence within us. Therefore let us not exaggerate the impotence of these foes, but feel that there are real dangers, as in the sorrows so in the blessings of our outward life, and that the evil to be dreaded is that outward things, whether in their bright or in their dark aspects, may come between us and the home of our hearts, the love of the loving Christ.

II. So then, note next, the abundant victory of love.

Mark how the Apostle, in his lofty and enthusiastic way, is not content here with simply saying that he and his fellows conquer. It would be a poor thing, he seems to think, if the balance barely inclined to our side, if the victory were but just won by a hair's breadth and triumph were snatched, as it were, out of the very jaws of defeat. There must be something more than that to correspond to the power of the victorious Christ that is in us. And so, he says, we very abundantly conquer; we not only hinder these

things which he has been enumerating from doing that which it is their aim apparently to do, but we actually convert them into helpers or allies. The '*more* than conquerors' seems to mean, if there is any definite idea to be attached to it, the conversion of the enemy conquered into a friend and a helper. The American Indians had a superstition that every foe tomahawked sent fresh strength into the warrior's arm. And so all afflictions and trials rightly borne, and therefore overcome, make a man stronger, and bring him nearer to Jesus Christ.

Note then, further, that not only is this victory more than bare victory, being the conversion of the enemy into allies, but that it is a victory which is won even whilst we are in the midst of the strife. It is not that we shall be conquerors in some far-off heaven, when the noise of battle has ceased and they hang the trumpet in the hall, but it is here now, in the hand-to-hand and foot-to-foot death-grapple that we do overcome. No ultimate victory, in some far-off and blessed heaven, will be ours unless moment by moment, here, to-day,' we *are* more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'

So, then, about this abundant victory there are these things to say:—You conquer the world only, then, when you make it contribute to your conscious possession of the love of Christ. That is the real victory, the only real victory in life. Men talk about overcoming here on earth, and they mean thereby the accomplishment of their

designs. A man has ‘victory,’ as it is phrased, in the world's strife, when he secures for himself the world's goods at which he has aimed, but that is not the Christian idea of the conquest of calamity. Everything that makes me feel more thrillingly in my inmost heart the verity and the sweetness of the love of Jesus Christ as my very own, is conquered by me and compelled to subserve my highest good, and everything which slips a film between me and Him, which obscures the light of His face to me, which makes me less desirous of, and less sure of, and less happy in, and less satisfied with, His love, is an enemy that has conquered me. And all these evils as the world calls them, and as our bleeding hearts have often felt them to be, are converted into allies and friends when they drive us to Christ, and keep us close to Him, in the conscious possession of His sweet and changeless love. That is the victory, and the only victory. Has the world helped me to lay hold of Christ? Then I have conquered it. Has the world loosened my grasp upon Him? Then it has conquered me.

Note then, further, that this abundant victory depends on how we deal with the changes of our outward lives, our sorrows or our joys. There is nothing, *per se*, salutary in affliction, there is nothing, *per se*, antagonistic to Christian faith in it either. No man is made better by his sorrows, no man need be made worse by them. That depends upon how we take the things which come storming against us. The set of your sails,

and the firmness of your grasp upon the tiller, determine whether the wind shall carry you to the haven or shall blow you out, a wandering waif, upon a shoreless and melancholy sea. There are some of you that have been blown away from your moorings by sorrow. There are some professing Christians who have been hindered in their work, and had their peace and their faith shattered all but irrevocably, because they have not accepted, in the spirit in which they were sent, the trials that have come for their good. The worst of all afflictions is a wasted affliction, and they are all wasted unless they teach us more of the reality and the blessedness of the love of Jesus Christ.

III. Lastly, notice the love which makes us conquerors.

The Apostle, with a wonderful instinctive sense of fitness, names Christ here by a name congruous to the thoughts which occupy his mind, when he speaks of Him that loved us. His question has been, Can anything separate us from the love of Christ? And his answer is, So far from that being the case, that very love, by occasion of sorrows and afflictions, tightens its grasp upon us, and, by the communication of itself to us, makes us more than conquerors. This great love of Jesus Christ, from which nothing can separate us, will use the very things that seem to threaten our separation as a means of coming nearer to us in its depth and in its preciousness.

The Apostle says ‘Him that loved us,’ and the words in the original distinctly point to some one fact as being the great instance of love. That is to say they point to His death. And so we may say Christ's love helps us to conquer because in His death He interprets for us all possible sorrows. If it be true that love to each of us nailed Him there, then nothing that can come to us but must be a love-token, and a fruit of that same love. The Cross is the key to all tribulation, and shows it to be a token and an instrument of an unchanging love.

Further, that great love of Christ helps us to conquer, because in His sufferings and death He becomes the Companion of all the weary. The rough, dark, lonely road changes its look when we see His footprints there, not without specks of blood in them, where the thorns tore His feet. We conquer our afflictions if we recognise that ‘in all our afflictions He was afflicted,’ and that Himself has drunk to its bitterest dregs the cup which He commends to our lips. He has left a kiss upon its margin, and we need not shrink when He holds it out to us and says ‘Drink ye all of it.’ That one thought of the companionship of the Christ in our sorrows makes us more than conquerors.

And lastly, this dying Lover of our souls communicates to us all, if we will, the strength whereby we may coerce all outward things into being helps to the fuller participation of His perfect love. Our sorrows and all the other

distracting externals do seek to drag us away from Him. Is all that happens in counteraction to that pull of the world, that we tighten our grasp upon Him, and will not let Him go; as some poor wretch might the horns of the altar that did not respond to his grasp? Nay what we lay hold of is no dead thing, but a living hand, and it grasps us more tightly than we can ever grasp it. So because He holds us, and not because we hold Him, we shall not be dragged away, by anything outside of our own weak and wavering souls, and all these embattled foes may come against us, they may shear off everything else, they cannot sever Christ from us unless we ourselves throw Him away. ‘In this thou shalt conquer.’ ‘They overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony.’

LOVE'S TRIUMPH

> ‘Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.’—ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

These rapturous words are the climax of the Apostle's long demonstration that the Gospel is the revelation of ‘the righteousness of God from faith to faith,’ and is thereby ‘the power of God

unto salvation.' What a contrast there is between the beginning and the end of his argument! It started with sombre, sad words about man's sinfulness and aversion from the knowledge of God. It closes with this sunny outburst of triumph; like some stream rising among black and barren cliffs, or melancholy moorlands, and foaming through narrow rifts in gloomy ravines, it reaches at last fertile lands, and flows calm, the sunlight dancing on its broad surface, till it loses itself at last in the unfathomable ocean of the love of God.

We are told that the Biblical view of human nature is too dark. Well, the important question is not whether it is dark, but whether it is true. But, apart from that, the doctrine of Scripture about man's moral condition is not dark, if you will take the whole of it together. Certainly, a part of it is very dark. The picture, for instance, of what men are, painted at the beginning of this Epistle, is shadowed like a canvas of Rembrandt's. The Bible is 'Nature's sternest painter but her best.' But to get the whole doctrine of Scripture on the subject, we have to take its confidence as to what men may become, as well as its portrait of what they are—and then who will say that the anthropology of Scripture is gloomy? To me it seems that the unrelieved blackness of the view which, because it admits no fall, can imagine no rise, which sees in all man's sins and sorrows no token of the dominion of an alien power, and has, therefore, no reason to believe that they can be separated from

humanity, is the true ‘Gospel of despair,’ and that the system which looks steadily at all the misery and all the wickedness, and calmly proposes to cast it all out, is really the only doctrine of human nature which throws any gleam of light on the darkness. Christianity begins indeed with, ‘There is none that doeth good, no, not one,’ but it ends with this victorious pæan of our text.

And what a majestic close it is to the great words that have gone before, fitly crowning even their lofty height! One might well shrink from presuming to take such words as a text, with any idea of exhausting or of enhancing them. My object is very much more humble. I simply wish to bring out the remarkable order, in which Paul here marshals, in his passionate, rhetorical amplification, all the enemies that can be supposed to seek to wrench us away from the love of God; and triumphs over them all. We shall best measure the fullness of the words by simply taking these clauses as they stand in the text.

I. The love of God is unaffected by the extremest changes of our condition.

The Apostle begins his fervid catalogue of vanquished foes by a pair of opposites which might seem to cover the whole ground—‘neither death nor life.’ What more can be said? Surely, these two include everything. From one point of view they do. But yet, as we shall see, there is

more to be said. And the special reason for beginning with this pair of possible enemies is probably to be found by remembering that they are a pair, that between them they do cover the whole ground and represent the *extremes* of change which can befall us. The one stands at the one pole, the other at the other. If these two stations, so far from each other, are equally near to God's love, then no intermediate point can be far from it. If the most violent change which we can experience does not in the least matter to the grasp which the love of God has on us, or to the grasp which we may have on it, then no less violent a change can be of any consequence. It is the same thought in a somewhat modified form, as we find in another word of Paul's, 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.' Our subordination to Him is the same, and our consecration should be the same, in all varieties of condition, even in that greatest of all variations. His love to us makes no account of that mightiest of changes. How should it be affected by slighter ones?

The distance of a star is measured by the apparent change in its position, as seen from different points of the earth's surface or orbit. But this great Light stands steadfast in our heaven, nor moves a hair's-breadth, nor pours a feebler ray on us, whether we look up to it from the midsummer day of busy life, or from the midwinter of death. These opposites are parted by a distance to which the millions of miles of the world's path among the stars are but a point,

and yet the love of God streams down on them alike.

Of course, the confidence in immortality is implied in this thought. Death does not, in the slightest degree, affect the essential vitality of the soul; so it does not, in the slightest degree, affect the outflow of God's love to that soul. It is a change of condition and circumstance, and no more. He does not lose us in the dust of death. The withered leaves on the pathway are trampled into mud, and indistinguishable to human eyes; but He sees them even as when they hung green and sunlit on the mystic tree of life.

How beautifully this thought contrasts with the saddest aspect of the power of death in our human experience! He is Death the Separator, who unclasps our hands from the closest, dearest grasp, and divides asunder joints and marrow, and parts soul and body, and withdraws us from all our habitude and associations and occupations, and loosens every bond of society and concord, and hales us away into a lonely land. But there is one bond which his ‘abhorred shears’ cannot cut. Their edge is turned on *it*. One Hand holds us in a grasp which the fleshless fingers of Death in vain strive to loosen. The separator becomes the uniter; he rends us apart from the world that He may ‘bring us to God.’ The love filtered by drops on us in life is poured upon us in a flood in death; ‘for I am persuaded, that neither death nor life shall be able to

separate us from the love of God.'

II. The love of God is undiverted from us by any other order of beings.

'Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,' says Paul. Here we pass from conditions affecting ourselves to living beings beyond ourselves. Now, it is important for understanding the precise thought of the Apostle to observe that this expression, when used without any qualifying adjective, seems uniformly to mean good angels, the hierarchy of blessed spirits before the throne. So that there is no reference to 'spiritual wickedness in high places' striving to draw men away from God. The supposition which the Apostle makes is, indeed, an impossible one, that these ministering spirits, who are sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation, should so forget their mission and contradict their nature as to seek to bar us out from the love which it is their chiefest joy to bring to us. He knows it to be an impossible supposition, and its very impossibility gives energy to his conclusion, just as when in the same fashion he makes the other equally impossible supposition about an angel from heaven preaching another gospel than that which he had preached to them.

So we may turn the general thought of this second category of impotent efforts in two different ways, and suggest, first, that it implies the utter powerlessness of any third party in

regard to the relations between our souls and God.

We alone have to do with Him alone. The awful fact of individuality, that solemn mystery of our personal being, has its most blessed or its most dread manifestation in our relation to God. There no other Being has any power. Counsel and stimulus, suggestion or temptation, instruction or lies, which may tend to lead us nearer to Him or away from Him, they may indeed give us; but after they have done their best or their worst, all depends on the personal act of our own innermost being. Man or angel can affect that, but from without. The old mystics called prayer 'the flight of the lonely soul to the only God.' It is the name for all religion. These two, God and the soul, have to 'transact,' as our Puritan forefathers used to say, as if there were no other beings in the universe but only they two. Angels and principalities and powers may stand beholding with sympathetic joy; they may minister blessing and guardianship in many ways; but the decisive act of union between God and the soul they can neither effect nor prevent.

And as for them, so for men around us; the limits of their power to harm us are soon set. They may shut us out from human love by calumnies, and dig deep gulfs of alienation between us and dear ones; they may hurt and annoy us in a thousand ways with slanderous tongues, and arrows dipped in poisonous hatred,

but one thing they cannot do. They may build a wall around us, and imprison us from many a joy and many a fair prospect, but they cannot put a roof on it to keep out the sweet influences from above, or hinder us from looking up to the heavens. Nobody can come between us and God but ourselves.

Or, we may turn this general thought in another direction, and say, These blessed spirits around the throne do not absorb and intercept His love. They gather about its steps in their ‘solemn troops and sweet societies’; but close as are their ranks, and innumerable as is their multitude, they do not prevent that love from passing beyond them to us on the outskirts of the crowd. The planet nearest the sun is drenched and saturated with fiery brightness, but the rays from the centre of life pass on to each of the sister spheres in its turn, and travel away outwards to where the remotest of them all rolls in its far-off orbit, unknown for millenniums to dwellers closer to the sun, but through all the ages visited by warmth and light according to its needs. Like that poor, sickly woman who could lay her wasted fingers on the hem of Christ's garment, notwithstanding the thronging multitude, we can reach our hands through all the crowd, or rather He reaches His strong hand to us and heals and blesses us. All the guests are fed full at that great table. One's gain is not another's loss. The multitudes sit on the green grass, and the last man of the last fifty gets as much as the first. ‘They did all eat, and

were filled'; and more remains than fed them all. So all beings are 'nourished from the King's country,' and none jostle others out of their share. This healing fountain is not exhausted of its curative power by the early comers. 'I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.' 'Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.'

III. The love of God is raised above the power of time.

'Nor things present, nor things to come,' is the Apostle's next class of powers impotent to disunite us from the love of God. The rhythmical arrangement of the text deserves to be noticed, as bearing not only on its music and rhetorical flow, but as affecting its force. We had first a pair of opposites, and then a triplet; 'death and life: angels, principalities, and powers.' We have again a pair of opposites; 'things present, things to come,' again followed by a triplet, 'height nor depth, nor any other creature.' The effect of this is to divide the whole into two, and to throw the first and second classes more closely together, as also the third and fourth. Time and Space, these two mysterious ideas, which work so fatally on all human love, are powerless here.

The great revelation of God, on which the whole of Judaism was built, was that made to Moses of the name 'I Am that I Am.' And parallel to the verbal revelation was the symbol of the Bush, burning and unconsumed, which is so

often misunderstood. It appears wholly contrary to the usage of Scriptural visions, which are ever wont to express in material form the same truth which accompanies them in words, that the meaning of that vision should be, as it is frequently taken as being, the continuance of Israel unharmed by the fiery furnace of persecution. Not the continuance of Israel, but the eternity of Israel's God is the teaching of that flaming wonder. The burning Bush and the Name of the Lord proclaimed the same great truth of self-derived, self-determined, timeless, undecaying Being. And what better symbol than the bush burning, and yet not burning out, could be found of that God in whose life there is no tendency to death, whose work digs no pit of weariness into which it falls, who gives and is none the poorer, who fears no exhaustion in His spending, no extinction in His continual shining?

And this eternity of Being is no mere metaphysical abstraction. It is eternity of love, for God is love. That great stream, the pouring out of His own very inmost Being, knows no pause, nor does the deep fountain from which it flows ever sink one hair's-breadth in its pure basin.

We know of earthly loves which cannot die. They have entered so deeply into the very fabric of the soul, that like some cloth dyed in grain, as long as two threads hold together they will retain the tint. We have to thank God for such instances of love stronger than death, which

make it easier for us to believe in the unchanging duration of His. But we know, too, of love that can change, and we know that all love must part. Few of us have reached middle life, who do not, looking back, see our track strewed with the gaunt skeletons of dead friendships, and dotted with 'oaks of weeping,' waving green and mournful over graves, and saddened by footprints striking away from the line of march, and leaving us the more solitary for their departure.

How blessed then to know of a love which cannot change or die! The past, the present, and the future are all the same to Him, to whom 'a thousand years,' that can corrode so much of earthly love, are in their power to change 'as one day,' and 'one day,' which can hold so few of the expressions of our love, may be 'as a thousand years' in the multitude and richness of the gifts which it can be expanded to contain. The whole of what He has been to any past, He is to us to-day. 'The God of Jacob is our refuge.' All these old-world stories of loving care and guidance may be repeated in our lives.

So we may bring the blessedness of all the past into the present, and calmly face the misty future, sure that it cannot rob us of His love.

Whatever may drop out of our vainly-clasping hands, it matters not, if only our hearts are stayed on His love, which neither things present nor things to come can alter or remove. Looking

on all the flow of ceaseless change, the waste and fading, the alienation and cooling, the decrepitude and decay of earthly affection, we can lift up with gladness, heightened by the contrast, the triumphant song of the ancient Church: 'Give thanks unto the Lord: for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever!'

IV. The love of God is present everywhere.

The Apostle ends his catalogue with a singular trio of antagonists; 'nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,' as if he had got impatient of the enumeration of impotencies, and having named the outside boundaries in space of the created universe, flings, as it were, with one rapid toss, into that large room the whole that it can contain, and triumphs over it all.

As the former clause proclaimed the powerlessness of Time, so this proclaims the powerlessness of that other great mystery of creatural life which we call Space, Height or depth, it matters not. That diffusive love diffuses itself equally in all directions. Up or down, it is all the same. The distance from the centre is the same to Zenith or to Nadir.

Here, we have the same process applied to that idea of Omnipresence as was applied in the former clause to the idea of Eternity. That thought, so hard to grasp with vividness, and not altogether a glad one to a sinful soul, is all softened and glorified, as some solemn Alpine cliff of bare rock is when the tender morning

light glows on it, when it is thought of as the Omnipresence of Love. ‘Thou, God, seest me,’ may be a stern word, if the God who sees be but a mighty Maker or a righteous Judge. As reasonably might we expect a prisoner in his solitary cell to be glad when he thinks that the jailer's eye is on him from some unseen spy-hole in the wall, as expect any thought of God but one to make a man read that grand one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm with joy: ‘If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.’ So may a man say shudderingly to himself, and tremble as he asks in vain, ‘Whither shall I flee from Thy Presence?’ But how different it all is when we can cast over the marble whiteness of that solemn thought the warm hue of life, and change the form of our words into this of our text: ‘Nor height, nor depth, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.’

In that great ocean of the divine love we live and move and have our being, floating in it like some sea flower which spreads its filmy beauty and waves its long tresses in the depths of mid-ocean. The sound of its waters is ever in our ears, and above, beneath, around us, its mighty currents run evermore. We need not cower before the fixed gaze of some stony god, looking on us unmoved like those Egyptian deities that sit pitiless with idle hands on their laps, and wide-open lidless eyes gazing out across the sands. We need not fear the Omnipresence of Love, nor the Omniscience which knows us

altogether, and loves us even as it knows. Rather we shall be glad that we are ever in His Presence, and desire, as the height of all felicity and the power for all goodness, to walk all the day long in the light of His countenance, till the day come when we shall receive the crown of our perfecting in that we shall be ‘ever with the Lord.’

The recognition of this triumphant sovereignty of love over all these real and supposed antagonists makes us, too, lords over them, and delivers us from the temptations which some of them present us to separate ourselves from the love of God. They all become our servants and helpers, uniting us to that love. So we are set free from the dread of death and from the distractions incident to life. So we are delivered from superstitious dread of an unseen world, and from craven fear of men. So we are emancipated from absorption in the present and from careful thought for the future. So we are at home everywhere, and every corner of the universe is to us one of the many mansions of our Father's house. ‘All things are yours, ... and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.’

I do not forget the closing words of this great text. I have not ventured to include them in our present subject, because they would have introduced another wide region of thought to be laid down on our already too narrow canvas.

But remember, I beseech you, that this love of

God is explained by our Apostle to be ‘in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Love illimitable, all-pervasive, eternal; yes, but a love which has a channel and a course; love which has a method and a process by which it pours itself over the world. It is not, as some representations would make it, a vague, nebulous light diffused through space as in a chaotic half-made universe, but all gathered in that great Light which rules the day—even in Him who said: ‘I am the Light of the world.’ In Christ the love of God is all centred and embodied, that it may be imparted to all sinful and hungry hearts, even as burning coals are gathered on a hearth that they may give warmth to all that are in the house. ‘God *so* loved the world’—not merely *so much*, but in *such a fashion*—‘that’—that what? Many people would leap at once from the first to the last clause of the verse, and regard eternal life for all and sundry as the only adequate expression of the universal love of God. Not so does Christ speak. Between that universal love and its ultimate purpose and desire for every man He inserts two conditions, one on God's part, one on man's. God's love reaches its end, namely, the bestowal of eternal life, by means of a divine act and a human response. ‘God *so* loved the world, that He *gave* His only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ So all the universal love of God for you and me and for all our brethren is ‘in Christ Jesus our Lord,’ and faith in Him unites us to it by bonds which no foe can break, no shock

of change can snap, no time can rot, no distance can stretch to breaking. 'For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

THE SACRIFICE OF THE BODY

> 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'—ROMANS xii. 1.

In the former part of this letter the Apostle has been building up a massive fabric of doctrine, which has stood the waste of centuries, and the assaults of enemies, and has been the home of devout souls. He now passes to speak of practice, and he binds the two halves of his letter indissolubly together by that significant 'therefore,' which does not only look back to the thing last said, but to the whole of the preceding portion of the letter. 'What God hath joined together let no man put asunder.' Christian living is inseparably connected with Christian believing. Possibly the error of our forefathers was in cutting faith too much loose from

practice, and supposing that an orthodox creed was sufficient, though I think the extent to which they did suppose that has been very much exaggerated. The temptation of this day is precisely the opposite. ‘Conduct is three-fourths of life,’ says one of our teachers. Yes. But what about the *fourth* fourth which underlies conduct? Paul's way is the right way. Lay broad and deep the foundations of God's facts revealed to us, and then build upon that the fabric of a noble life. This generation superficially tends to cut practice loose from faith, and so to look for grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. Wrong thinking will not lead to right doing. ‘I beseech you, *therefore*, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.’

The Apostle, in beginning his practical exhortations, lays as the foundations of them all two companion precepts: one, with which we have to deal, affecting mainly the outward life; its twin sister, which follows in the next verse, affecting mainly the inward life. He who has drunk in the spirit of Paul's doctrinal teaching will present his body a living sacrifice, and be renewed in the spirit of his mind; and thus, outwardly and inwardly, will be approximating to God's ideal, and all specific virtues will be his in germ. Those two precepts lay down the broad outline, and all that follow in the way of specific commandments is but filling in its details.

I. We observe that we have here, first, an all-inclusive directory for the outward life.

Now, it is to be noticed that the metaphor of sacrifice runs through the whole of the phraseology of my text. The word rendered ‘present’ is a technical expression for the sacerdotal action of offering. A tacit contrast is drawn between the sacrificial ritual, which was familiar to Romans as well as Jews, and the true Christian sacrifice and service. In the former a large portion of the sacrifices consisted of animals which were slain. Ours is to be ‘a living sacrifice.’ In the former the offering was presented to the Deity, and became His property. In the Christian service, the gift passes, in like manner, from the possession of the worshipper, and is set apart for the uses of God, for that is the proper meaning of the word ‘holy.’ The outward sacrifice gave an odour of a sweet smell, which, by a strong metaphor, was declared to be fragrant in the nostrils of Deity. In like manner, the Christian sacrifice is ‘acceptable unto God.’ These other sacrifices were purely outward, and derived no efficacy from the disposition of the worshipper. Our sacrifice, though the material of the offering be corporeal, is the act of the inner man, and so is called ‘rational’ rather than ‘reasonable,’ as our Version has it, or as in other parts of Scripture, ‘spiritual.’ And the last word of my text, ‘service,’ retains the sacerdotal allusion, because it does not mean the service of a slave or domestic, but that of a priest.

And so the sum of the whole is that the master-word for the outward life of a Christian is

sacrifice. That, again, includes two things—self-surrender and surrender to God.

Now, Paul was not such a superficial moralist as to begin at the wrong end, and talk about the surrender of the outward life, unless as the result of the prior surrender of the inward, and that priority of the consecration of the man to his offering of the body is contained in the very metaphor. For a priest needs to be consecrated before he can offer, and we in our innermost wills, in the depths of our nature, must be surrendered and set apart to God ere any of our outward activities can be laid upon His altar. The Apostle, then, does not make the mistake of substituting external for internal surrender, but he presupposes that the latter has preceded. He puts the sequence more fully in the parallel passage in this very letter: 'Yield yourselves unto God, and your bodies as instruments of righteousness unto Him.' So, then, first of all, we must be priests by our inward consecration, and then, since 'a priest must have somewhat to offer,' we must bring the outward life and lay it upon His altar.

Now, of the two thoughts which I have said are involved in this great keyword, the former is common to Christianity, with all noble systems of morality, whether religious or irreligious. It is a commonplace, on which I do not need to dwell, that every man who will live a man's life, and not that of a beast, must sacrifice the flesh, and rigidly keep it down. But that commonplace

is lifted into an altogether new region, assumes a new solemnity, and finds new power for its fulfilment when we add to the moralist's duty of control of the animal and outward nature the other thought, that the surrender must be to God.

There is no need for my dwelling at any length on the various practical directions in which this great exhortation must be wrought out. It is of more importance, by far, to have well fixed in our minds and hearts the one dominant thought that sacrifice is the keyword of the Christian life than to explain the directions in which it applies. But still, just a word or two about these. There are three ways in which we may look at the body, which the Apostle here says is to be yielded up unto God.

It is the recipient of impressions from without. *There* is a field for consecration. The eye that looks upon evil, and by the look has rebellious, lustful, sensuous, foul desires excited in the heart, breaks this solemn law. The eye that among the things seen dwells with complacency on the pure, and turns from the impure as if a hot iron had been thrust into its pupil; that in the things seen discerns shimmering behind them, and manifested through them, the things unseen and eternal, is the consecrated eye. ‘Art for Art's sake,’ to quote the cant of the day, has too often meant art for the flesh's sake. And there are pictures and books, and sights of various sorts, flashed before the eyes of you

young men and women which it is pollution to dwell upon, and should be pain to remember. I beseech you all to have guard over these gates of the heart, and to pray, 'Turn away mine eyes from viewing vanity.' And the other senses, in like manner, have need to be closely connected with God if they are not to rush us down to the devil.

The body is not only the recipient of impressions. It is the possessor of appetites and necessities. See to it that these are indulged, with constant reference to God. It is no small attainment of the Christian life 'to eat our meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.' In a hundred directions this characteristic of our corporeal lives tends to lead us all away from supreme consecration to Him. There is the senseless luxury of this generation. There is the exaggerated care for physical strength and completeness amongst the young; there is the intemperance in eating and drinking, which is the curse and the shame of England. There is the provision for the flesh, the absorbing care for the procuring of material comforts, which drowns the spirit in miserable anxieties, and makes men bond-slaves. There is the corruption which comes from drunkenness and from lust. There is the indolence which checks lofty aspirations and stops a man in the middle of noble work. And there are many other forms of evil on which I need not dwell, all of which are swept clean out of the way when we lay to heart this injunction: 'I beseech you present your bodies a living

sacrifice,' and let appetites and tastes and corporeal needs be kept in rigid subordination and in conscious connection with Him. I remember a quaint old saying of a German schoolmaster, who apostrophised his body thus: 'I go with you three times a day to eat; you must come with me three times a day to pray.' Subjugate the body, and let it be the servant and companion of the devout spirit.

It is also, besides being the recipient of impressions, and the possessor of needs and appetites, our instrument for working in the world. And so the exhortation of my text comes to include this, that all our activities done by means of brain and eye and tongue and hand and foot shall be consciously devoted to Him, and laid as a sacrifice upon His altar. That pervasive, universally diffused reference to God, in all the details of daily life, is the thing that Christian men and women need most of all to try to cultivate. 'Pray without ceasing,' says the Apostle. This exhortation can only be obeyed if our work is indeed worship, being done by God's help, for God's sake, in communion with God.

So, dear friends, sacrifice is the keynote—meaning thereby surrender, control, and stimulus of the corporeal frame, surrender to God, in regard to the impressions which we allow to be made upon our senses, to the indulgence which we grant to our appetites, and the satisfaction which we seek for our needs, and to the activities which we engage in by

means of this wondrous instrument with which God has trusted us. These are the plain principles involved in the exhortation of my text. ‘He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.’ ‘I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.’ It is a good servant; it is a bad master.

II. Note, secondly, the relation between this priestly service and other kinds of worship.

I need only say a word about that. Paul is not meaning to depreciate the sacrificial ritual, from which he drew his emblem. But he is meaning to assert that the devotion of a life, manifested through bodily activity, is higher in its nature than the symbolical worship of any altar and of any sacrifice. And that falls in with prevailing tendencies in this day, which has laid such a firm hold on the principle that daily conduct is better than formal worship, that it has forgotten to ask the question whether the daily conduct is likely to be satisfactory if the formal worship is altogether neglected. I believe, as profoundly as any man can, that the true worship is distinguishable from and higher than the more sensuous forms of the Catholic or other sacramentarian churches, or the more simple of the Puritan and Nonconformist, or the altogether formless of the Quaker. I believe that the best worship is the manifold activities of daily life laid upon God's altar, so that the division between things secular and things sacred is to a large extent misleading and irrelevant. But at the

same time I believe that you have very little chance of getting this diffused and all-pervasive reference of all a man's doings to God unless there are, all through his life, recurring with daily regularity, reservoirs of power, stations where he may rest, kneeling-places where the attitude of service is exchanged for the attitude of supplication; times of quiet communion with God which shall feed the worshipper's activities as the white snowfields on the high summits feed the brooks that sparkle by the way, and bring fertility wherever they run. So, dear brethren, remember that whilst life is the field of worship there must be the inward worship within the shrine if there is to be the outward service.

III. Lastly, note the equally comprehensive motive and ground of this all-inclusive directory for conduct.

'I beseech you, by the mercies of God.' That plural does not mean that the Apostle is extending his view over the whole wide field of the divine beneficence, but rather that he is contemplating the one all-inclusive mercy about which the former part of his letter has been eloquent—viz. the gift of Christ—and contemplating it in the manifoldness of the blessings which flow from it. The mercies of God which move a man to yield himself as a sacrifice are not the diffused beneficences of His providence, but the concentrated love that lies in the person and work of His Son.

And there, as I believe, is the one motive to which we can appeal with any prospect of its being powerful enough to give the needful impetus all through a life. The sacrifice of Christ is the ground on which our sacrifices can be offered and accepted, for it was the sacrifice of a death propitiatory and cleansing, and on it, as the ancient ritual taught us, may be reared the enthusiastic sacrifice of a life—a thankoffering for it.

Nor is it only the ground on which our sacrifice is accepted, but it is the great motive by which our sacrifice is impelled. *There* is the difference between the Christian teaching, 'present your bodies a sacrifice,' and the highest and noblest of similar teaching elsewhere. One of the purest and loftiest of the ancient moralists was a contemporary of Paul's. He would have re-echoed from his heart the Apostle's directory, but he knew nothing of the Apostle's motive. So his exhortations were powerless. He had no spell to work on men's hearts, and his lofty teachings were as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Whilst Seneca taught, Rome was a cesspool of moral putridity and Nero butchered. So it always is. There may be noble teachings about self-control, purity, and the like, but an evil and adulterous generation is slow to dance to such piping.

Our poet has bid us—

'Move upwards, casting out the beast,

And let the ape and tiger die.'

But how is this heavy bulk of ours to ‘move upwards’; how is the beast to be ‘cast out’; how are the ‘ape and tiger’ in us to be slain? Paul has told us, ‘By the mercies of God.’ Christ's gift, meditated on, accepted, introduced into will and heart, is the one power that will melt our obstinacy, the one magnet that will draw us after it.

Nothing else, brethren, as your own experience has taught you, and as the experience of the world confirms, nothing else will bind Behemoth, and put a hook in his nose. Apart from the constraining motive of the love of Christ, all the cords of prudence, conscience, advantage, by which men try to bind their unruly passions and manacle the insisting flesh, are like the chains on the demoniac's wrists—‘And he had oftentimes been bound by chains, and the chains were snapped asunder.’ But the silken leash with which the fair Una in the poem leads the lion, the silken leash of love will bind the strong man, and enable us to rule ourselves. If we will open our hearts to the sacrifice of Christ, we shall be able to offer ourselves as thankofferings. If we will let His love sway our wills and consciences, He will give our wills and consciences power to master and to offer up our flesh. And the great change, according to which He will one day change the body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory, will be begun in us, if we live under the

influence of the motive and the commandment which this Apostle bound together in our text and in his other great words, ‘Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and spirit, which are His.’

TRANSFIGURATION

> 'Be not conformed to this world; but
> be ye transformed by the renewing
> of your mind, that ye may prove
> what is that good, and acceptable,
> and perfect will of God.'—ROMANS
> xii. 2.

I had occasion to point out, in a sermon on the preceding verse, that the Apostle is, in this context, making the transition from the doctrinal to the practical part of his letter, and that he lays down broad principles, of which all his subsequent injunctions and exhortations are simply the filling up of the details. One master word, for the whole Christian life, as we then saw, is sacrifice, self-surrender, and that to God. In like manner, Paul here brackets, with that great conception of the Christian life, another equally dominant and equally comprehensive. In one aspect, it is self-surrender; in another, it is growing transformation. And, just as in the former verse we found that an inward surrender preceded the outward sacrifice, and that the inner man, having been consecrated as a priest, by this yielding of himself to God, was then called upon to manifest inward consecration by outward sacrifice, so in this further exhortation, an inward 'renewing of the mind' is regarded as the necessary antecedent of transformation of

outward life.

So we have here another comprehensive view of what the Christian life ought to be, and that not only grasped, as it were, in its very centre and essence, but traced out in two directions—as to that which must precede it within, and as to that which follows it as consequence. An outline of the possibilities, and therefore the duties, of the Christian, is set forth here, in these three thoughts of my text, the renewed mind issuing in a transfigured life, crowned and rewarded by a clearer and ever clearer insight into what we ought to be and do.

I. Note, then, that the foundation of all transformation of character and conduct is laid deep in a renewed mind.

Now it is a matter of world-wide experience, verified by each of us in our own case, if we have ever been honest in the attempt, that the power of self-improvement is limited by very narrow bounds. Any man that has ever tried to cure himself of the most trivial habit which he desires to get rid of, or to alter in the slightest degree the set of some strong taste or current of his being, knows how little he can do, even by the most determined effort. Something may be effected, but, alas! as the proverbs of all nations and all lands have taught us, it is very little indeed. ‘You cannot expel nature with a fork,’ said the Roman. ‘What's bred in the bone won't come out of the flesh,’ says the Englishman. ‘Can

the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?' says the Hebrew. And we all know what the answer to that question is. The problem that is set before a man when you tell him to effect self-improvement is something like that which confronted that poor paralytic lying in the porch at the pool: 'If you can walk you will be able to get to the pool that will make you able to walk. But you have got to be cured before you can do what you need to do in order to be cured.' Only one knife can cut the knot. The Gospel of Jesus Christ presents itself, not as a mere republication of morality, not as merely a new stimulus and motive to do what is right, but as an actual communication to men of a new power to work in them, a strong hand laid upon our poor, feeble hand with which we try to put on the brake or to apply the stimulus. It is a new gift of a life which will unfold itself after its own nature, as the bud into flower, and the flower into fruit; giving new desires, tastes, directions, and renewing the whole nature. And so, says Paul, the beginning of transformation of character is the renovation in the very centre of the being, and the communication of a new impulse and power to the inward self.

Now, I suppose that in my text the word 'mind' is not so much employed in the widest sense, including all the affections and will, and the other faculties of our nature, as in the narrower sense of the perceptive power, or that faculty in our nature by which we recognise, and make our own, certain truths. 'The renewing of

the mind,' then, is only, in such an interpretation, a theological way of putting the simpler English thought, a change of estimates, a new set of views; or if that word be too shallow, as indeed it is, a new set of convictions. It is profoundly true that 'As a man thinketh, so is he.' Our characters are largely made by our estimates of what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable. And what the Apostle is thinking about here is, as I take it, principally how the body of Christian truth, if it effects a lodgment in, not merely the brain of a man, but his whole nature, will modify and alter it all. Why, we all know how often a whole life has been revolutionised by the sudden dawning or rising in its sky, of some starry new truth, formerly hidden and undreamed of. And if we should translate the somewhat archaic phraseology of our text into the plainest of modern English, it just comes to this: If you want to change your characters, and God knows they all need it, change the deep convictions of your mind; and get hold, as living realities, of the great truths of Christ's Gospel. If you and I really believed what we say we believe, that Jesus Christ has died for us, and lives for us, and is ready to pour out upon us the gift of His Divine Spirit, and wills that we should be like Him, and holds out to us the great and wonderful hopes and prospects of an absolutely eternal life of supreme and serene blessedness at His right hand, should we be, could we be, the sort of people that most of us are? It is not the much that you say you believe

that shapes your character; it is the little that you habitually realise. Truth professed has no transforming power; truth received and fed upon can revolutionise a man's whole character.

So, dear brethren, remember that my text, though it is an analysis of the methods of Christian progress, and though it is a wonderful setting forth of the possibilities open to the poorest, dwarfed, blinded, corrupted nature, is also all commandment. And if it is true that the principles of the Gospel exercise transforming power upon men's lives, and that in order for these principles to effect their natural results there must be honest dealing with them, on our parts, take this as the practical outcome of all this first part of my sermon—let us all see to it that we keep ourselves in touch with the truths which we say we believe; and that we thoroughgoingly apply these truths in all their searching, revealing, quickening, curbing power, to every action of our daily lives. If for one day we could bring everything that we do into touch with the creed that we profess, we should be different men and women. Make of your every thought an action; link every action with a thought. Or, to put it more Christianlike, let there be nothing in your creed which is not in your commandments; and let nothing be in your life which is not moulded by these. The beginning of all transformation is the revolutionised conviction of a mind that has accepted the truths of the Gospel.

II. Well then, secondly, note the transfigured life.

The Apostle uses in his positive commandment, ‘Be ye transformed,’ the same word which is employed by two of the Evangelists in their account of our Lord's transfiguration. And although I suppose it would be going too far to assert that there is a distinct reference intended to that event, it may be permissible to look back to it as being a lovely illustration of the possibilities that open to an honest Christian life—the possibility of a change, coming from within upwards, and shedding a strange radiance on the face, whilst yet the identity remains. So by the rippling up from within of the renewed mind will come into our lives a transformation not altogether unlike that which passed on Him when His garments did shine ‘so as no fuller on earth could white them’; and His face was as the sun in his strength.

The life is to be transfigured, yet it remains the same, not only in the consciousness of personal identity, but in the main trend and drift of the character. There is nothing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is meant to obliterate the lines of the strongly marked individuality which each of us receives by nature. Rather the Gospel is meant to heighten and deepen these, and to make each man more intensely himself, more thoroughly individual and unlike anybody else. The perfection of our nature is found in the

pursuit, to the furthest point, of the characteristics of our nature, and so, by reason of diversity, there is the greater harmony, and, all taken together, will reflect less inadequately the infinite glories of which they are all partakers. But whilst the individuality remains, and ought to be heightened by Christian consecration, yet a change should pass over our lives, like the change that passes over the winter landscape when the summer sun draws out the green leaves from the hard black boughs, and flashes a fresh colour over all the brown pastures. There should be such a change as when a drop or two of ruby wine falls into a cup, and so diffuses a gradual warmth of tint over all the whiteness of the water. Christ in us, if we are true to Him, will make us more ourselves, and yet new creatures in Christ Jesus.

And the transformation is to be into His likeness who is the pattern of all perfection. We must be moulded after the same type. There are two types possible for us: this world; Jesus Christ. We have to make our choice which is to be the headline after which we are to try to write. ‘They that make them are like unto them.’ Men resemble their gods; men become more or less like their idols. What you conceive to be desirable you will more and more assimilate yourselves to. Christ is the Christian man's pattern; is He not better than the blind, corrupt world?

That transformation is no sudden thing,

though the revolution which underlies it may be instantaneous. The working *out* of the new motives, the working *in* of the new power, is no mere work of a moment. It is a lifelong task till the lump be leavened. Michael Angelo, in his mystical way, used to say that sculpture effected its aim by the removal of parts; as if the statue lay somehow hid in the marble block. We have, day by day, to work at the task of removing the superfluities that mask its outlines. Sometimes with a heavy mallet, and a hard blow, and a broad chisel, we have to take away huge masses; sometimes, with fine tools and delicate touches, to remove a grain or two of powdered dust from the sparkling block, but always to seek more and more, by slow, patient toil, to conform ourselves to that serene type of all perfectness that we have learned to love in Jesus Christ.

And remember, brethren, this transformation is no magic change effected whilst men sleep. It is a commandment which we have to brace ourselves to perform, day by day to set ourselves to the task of more completely assimilating ourselves to our Lord. It comes to be a solemn question for each of us whether we can say, 'To-day I am liker Jesus Christ than I was yesterday; to-day the truth which renews the mind has a deeper hold upon me than it ever had before.'

But this positive commandment is only one side of the transfiguration that is to be effected. It is clear enough that if a new likeness is being stamped upon a man, the process may be looked

at from the other side; and that in proportion as we become liker Jesus Christ, we shall become more unlike the old type to which we were previously conformed. And so, says Paul, ‘Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.’ He does not mean to say that the nonconformity precedes the transformation. They are two sides of one process; both arising from the renewing of the mind within.

Now, I do not wish to do more than just touch most lightly upon the thoughts that are here, but I dare not pass them by altogether. ‘This world’ here, in my text, is more properly ‘this age,’ which means substantially the same thing as John's favourite word ‘world,’ viz. the sum total of godless men and things conceived of as separated from God, only that by this expression the essentially fleeting nature of that type is more distinctly set forth. Now the world is the world to-day just as much as it was in Paul's time. No doubt the Gospel has sweetened society; no doubt the average of godless life in England is a better thing than the average of godless life in the Roman Empire. No doubt there is a great deal of Christianity diffused through the average opinion and ways of looking at things, that prevail around us. But the World is the world still. There are maxims and ways of living, and so on, characteristic of the Christian life, which are in as complete antagonism to the ideas and maxims and practices that prevail amongst men who are outside of the influences of this Christian truth

in their own hearts, as ever they were.

And although it can only be a word, I want to put in here a very earnest word which the tendencies of this generation do very specially require. It seems to be thought, by a great many people, who call themselves Christians nowadays, that the nearer they can come in life, in ways of looking at things, in estimates of literature, for instance, in customs of society, in politics, in trade, and especially in amusements —the nearer they can come to the un-Christian world, the more 'broad' (save the mark!) and 'superior to prejudice' they are. 'Puritanism,' not only in theology, but in life and conduct, has come to be at a discount in these days. And it seems to be by a great many professing Christians thought to be a great feat to walk as the mules on the Alps do, with one foot over the path and the precipice down below. Keep away from the edge. You are safer so. Although, of course, I am not talking about mere conventional dissimilarities; and though I know and believe and feel all that can be said about the insufficiency, and even insincerity, of such, yet there is a broad gulf between the man who believes in Jesus Christ and His Gospel and the man who does not, and the resulting conducts cannot be the same unless the Christian man is insincere.

III. And now lastly, and only a word, note the great reward and crown of this transfigured life.

Paul puts it in words which, if I had time, would require some commenting upon. The issue of such a life is, to put it into plain English, an increased power of perceiving, instinctively and surely, what it is God's will that we should do. And that is the reward. Just as when you take away disturbing masses of metal from near a compass, it trembles to its true point, so when, by the discipline of which I have been speaking, there are swept away from either side of us the things that would perturb our judgment, there comes, as blessing and reward, a clear insight into that which it is our duty to do.

There may be many difficulties left, many perplexities. There is no promise here, nor is there anything in the tendencies of Christ-like living, to lead us to anticipate that guidance in regard to matters of prudence or expediency or temporal advantage will follow from such a transfigured life. All such matters are still to be determined in the proper fashion, by the exercise of our own best judgment and common-sense. But in the higher region, the knowledge of good and evil, surely it is a blessed reward, and one of the highest that can be given to a man, that there shall be in him so complete a harmony with God that, like God's Son, he ‘does always the things that please Him,’ and that the Father will show him whatsoever things Himself doeth; and that these also will the son do likewise. To know beyond doubt what I ought to do, and knowing, to have no hesitation or reluctance in doing it, seems to me to be heaven

upon earth, and the man that has it needs but little more. This, then, is the reward. Each peak we climb opens wider and clearer prospects into the untravelled land before us.

And so, brethren, here is the way, the only way, by which we can change ourselves, first let us have our minds renewed by contact with the truth, then we shall be able to transform our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and our faces too will shine, and our lives will be ennobled, by a serene beauty which men cannot but admire, though it may rebuke them. And as the issue of all we shall have clearer and deeper insight into that will, which to know is life, in keeping of which there is great reward. And thus our apostle's promise may be fulfilled for each of us. ‘We all with unveiled faces reflecting’—as a mirror does—‘the glory of the Lord, are changed ... into the same image.’

SOBER THINKING

> ‘For I say, through the grace that is given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.’—ROMANS xii. 3.

It is hard to give advice without seeming to

assume superiority; it is hard to take it, unless the giver identifies himself with the receiver, and shows that his counsel to others is a law for himself. Paul does so here, led by the delicate perception which comes from a loving heart, compared with which deliberate 'tact' is cold and clumsy. He wishes, as the first of the specific duties to which he invites the Roman Christians, an estimate of themselves based upon the recognition of God as the Giver of all capacities and graces, and leading to a faithful use for the general good of the 'gifts differing according to the grace given to us.' In the first words of our text, he enforces his counsel by an appeal to his apostolic authority; but he so presents it that, instead of separating himself from the Roman Christians by it, he unites himself with them. He speaks of 'the grace given to *me*,' and in verse 6 of 'the grace given to *us*.' He was made an Apostle by the same giving God who has bestowed varying gifts on each of *them*. He knows what is the grace which he possesses as he would have them know; and in these counsels he is assuming no superiority, but is simply using the special gift bestowed on him for the good of all. With this delicate turn of what might else have sounded harshly authoritative, putting prominently forward the divine gift and letting the man Paul to whom it was given fall into the background, he counsels as the first of the social duties which Christian men owe to one another, a sober and just estimate of themselves. This sober estimate is here regarded

as being important chiefly as an aid to right service. It is immediately followed by counsels to the patient and faithful exercise of differing gifts. For thus we may know what our gifts are; and the acquisition of such knowledge is the aim of our text.

I. What determines our gifts.

Paul here gives a precise standard, or ‘measure’ as he calls it, according to which we are to estimate ourselves. ‘Faith’ is the measure of our gifts, and is itself a gift from God. The strength of a Christian man's faith determines his whole Christian character. Faith is trust, the attitude of receptivity. There are in it a consciousness of need, a yearning desire and a confidence of expectation. It is the open empty hand held up with the assurance that it will be filled; it is the empty pitcher let down into the well with the assurance that it will be drawn up filled. It is the precise opposite of the self-dependent isolation which shuts us out from God. The law of the Christian life is ever, ‘according to your faith be it unto you’; ‘believe that ye receive and ye have them.’ So then the more faith a man exercises the more of God and Christ he has. It is the measure of our capacity, hence there may be indefinite increase in the gifts which God bestows on faithful souls. Each of us will have as much as he desires and is capable of containing. The walls of the heart are elastic, and desire expands them.

The grace given by faith works in the line of its possessor's natural faculties; but these are supernaturally reinforced and strengthened while, at the same time, they are curbed and controlled, by the divine gift, and the natural gifts thus dealt with become what Paul calls *charisms*. The whole nature of a Christian should be ennobled, elevated, made more delicate and intense, when the 'Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus' abides in and inspires it. Just as a sunless landscape is smitten into sudden beauty by a burst of sunshine which heightens the colouring of the flowers on the river's bank, and is flashed back from every silvery ripple on the stream, so the faith which brings the life of Christ into the life of the Christian makes him more of a man than he was before. So, there will be infinite variety in the resulting characters. It is the same force in various forms that rolls in the thunder or gleams in the dewdrops, that paints the butterfly's feathers or flashes in a star. All individual idiosyncrasies should be developed in the Christian Church, and will be when its members yield themselves fully to the indwelling Spirit, and can truly declare that the lives which they live in the flesh they live by the faith of the Son of God.

But Paul here regards the measure of faith as itself 'dealt to every man'; and however we may construe the grammar of this sentence there is a deep sense in which our faith is God's gift to us. We have to give equal emphasis to the two conceptions of faith as a human act and as a

divine bestowal, which have so often been pitted against each other as contradictory when really they are complementary. The apparent antagonism between them is but one instance of the great antithesis to which we come to at last in reference to all human thought on the relations of man to God. ‘It is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure’; and all our goodness is God-given goodness, and yet it is our goodness. Every devout heart has a consciousness that the faith which knits it to God is God's work in it, and that left to itself it would have remained alienated and faithless. The consciousness that his faith was his own act blended in full harmony with the twin consciousness that it was Christ's gift, in the agonised father's prayer, ‘Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.’

II. What is a just estimate of our gifts.

The Apostle tells us, negatively, that we are not to think more highly than we ought to think, and positively that we are to ‘think soberly.’

To arrive at a just estimate of ourselves the estimate must ever be accompanied with a distinct consciousness that all is God's gift. That will keep us from anything in the nature of pride or over-weening self-importance. It will lead to true humility, which is not ignorance of what we can do, but recognition that we, the doers, are of ourselves but poor creatures. We are less likely to fancy that we are greater than we are when

we feel that, whatever we are, God made us so. 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?'

Further, it is to be noted that the estimate of gifts which Paul enjoins is an estimate with a view to service. Much self-investigation is morbid, because it is self-absorbed; and much is morbid because it is undertaken only for the purpose of ascertaining one's 'spiritual condition.' Such self-examination is good enough in its way, and may sometimes be very necessary; but a testing of one's own capacities for the purpose of ascertaining what we are fit for, and what therefore it is our duty to do, is far more wholesome. Gifts are God's summons to work, and our first response to the summons should be our scrutiny of our gifts with a distinct purpose of using them for the great end for which we received them. It is well to take stock of the loaves that we have, if the result be that we bring our poor provisions to Him, and put them in His hands, that He may give them back to us so multiplied as to be more than adequate to the needs of the thousands. Such just estimate of our gifts is to be attained mainly by noting ourselves at work. Patient self-observation may be important, but is apt to be mistaken; and the true test of what we can do is what we *do* do.

The just estimate of our gifts which Paul enjoins is needful in order that we may ascertain what God has meant us to be and do, and may

neither waste our strength in trying to be some one else, nor hide our talent in the napkin of ignorance or false humility. There is quite as much harm done to Christian character and Christian service by our failure to recognise what is in our power, as by ambitious or ostentatious attempts at what is above our power. We have to be ourselves as God has made us in our natural faculties, and as the new life of Christ operating on these has made us new creatures in Him not by changing but by enlarging our old natures. It matters nothing what the special form of a Christian man's service may be; the smallest and the greatest are alike to the Lord of all, and He appoints His servants' work. Whether the servant be a cup-bearer or a counsellor is of little moment. 'He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.'

The positive aspect of this right estimate of one's gifts is, if we fully render the Apostle's words, as the Revised Version does, 'so to think as to think soberly.' There is to be self-knowledge in order to 'sobriety,' which includes not only what we mean by sober-mindedness, but self-government; and this aspect of the apostolic exhortation opens out into the thought that the gifts, which a just estimate of ourselves pronounces us to possess, need to be kept bright by the continual suppression of the mind of the flesh, by putting down earthly desires, by guarding against a selfish use of them, by preventing them by rigid control from becoming

disproportioned and our masters. All the gifts which Christ bestows upon His people He bestows on condition that they bind them together by the golden chain of self-control.

MANY AND ONE

> 'For we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.'—ROMANS xii. 4, 5.

To Paul there was the closest and most vital connection between the profoundest experiences of the Christian life and its plainest and most superficial duties. Here he lays one of his most mystical conceptions as the very foundation on which to rear the great structure of Christian conduct, and links on to one of his profoundest thoughts, the unity of all Christians in Christ, a comprehensive series of practical exhortations. We are accustomed to hear from many lips: 'I have no use for these dogmas that Paul delights in. Give me his practical teaching. You may keep the Epistle to the Romans, I hold by the thirteenth of First Corinthians.' But such an unnatural severance between the doctrine and the ethics of the Epistle cannot be effected without the destruction of both. The very principle of this Epistle to the Romans is that the

difference between the law and the Gospel is, that the one preaches conduct without a basis for it, and that the other says, First believe in Christ, and in the strength of that belief, do the right and be like Him. Here, then, in the very laying of the foundation for conduct in these verses we have in concrete example the secret of the Christian way of making good men.

I. The first point to notice here is, the unity of the derived life. Many are one, because they are each in Christ, and the individual relationship and derivation of life from Him makes them one whilst continuing to be many. That great metaphor, and nowadays much forgotten and neglected truth, is to Paul's mind the fact which ought to mould the whole life and conduct of individual Christians and to be manifested therein. There are three most significant and instructive symbols by which the unity of believers in Christ Jesus is set forth in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself gives us the one of the vine and its branches, and that symbol suggests the silent, effortless process by which the life-giving sap rises and finds its way from the deep root to the furthest tendril and the far-extended growth. The same symbol loses indeed in one respect its value if we transfer it to growths more congenial to our northern climate, and instead of the vine with its rich clusters, think of some great elm, deeply rooted, and with its firm bole and massive branches, through all of which the mystery of a common life penetrates and makes every leaf in the cloud of

foliage through which we look up participant of itself. But, profound and beautiful as our Lord's metaphor is, the vegetative uniformity of parts and the absence of individual characteristics make it, if taken alone, insufficient. In the tree one leaf is like another; it ‘grows green and broad and takes no care.’ Hence, to express the whole truth of the union between Christ and us we must bring in other figures. Thus we find the Apostle adducing the marriage tie, the highest earthly example of union, founded on choice and affection. But even that sacred bond leaves a gap between those who are knit together by it; and so we have the conception of our text, the unity of the body as representing for us the unity of believers with Jesus. This is a unity of life. He is not only head as chief and sovereign, but He is soul or life, which has its seat, not in this or that organ as old physics teach, but pervades the whole and ‘filleth all in all.’ The mystery which concerns the union of soul and body, and enshrouds the nature of physical life, is part of the felicity of this symbol in its Christian application. That commonest of all things, the mysterious force which makes matter live and glow under spiritual emotion, and changes the vibrations of a nerve, or the undulations of the grey brain, into hope and love and faith, eludes the scalpel and the microscope. Of man in his complex nature it is true that ‘clouds and darkness are round about him,’ and we may expect an equally solemn mystery to rest upon that which makes out of separate individuals

one living body, animated with the life and moved by the Spirit of the indwelling Christ. We can get no further back, and dig no deeper down, than His own words, 'I am ... the life.'

But, though this unity is mysterious, it is most real. Every Christian soul receives from Christ the life of Christ. There is a real implantation of a higher nature which has nothing to do with sin and is alien from death. There is a true regeneration which is supernatural, and which makes all who possess it one, in the measure of their possession, as truly as all the leaves on a tree are one because fed by the same sap, or all the members in the natural body are one, because nourished by the same blood. So the true bond of Christian unity lies in the common participation of the one Lord, and the real Christian unity is a unity of derived life.

The misery and sin of the Christian Church have been, and are, that it has sought to substitute other bonds of unity. The whole weary history of the divisions and alienations between Christians has surely sufficiently, and more than sufficiently, shown the failure of the attempts to base Christian oneness upon uniformity of opinion, or of ritual, or of purpose. The difference between the real unity, and these spurious attempts after it, is the difference between bundles of faggots, dead and held together by a cord, and a living tree lifting its multitudinous foliage towards the heavens. The bundle of faggots may be held together in some

sort of imperfect union, but is no exhibition of unity. If visible churches must be based on some kind of agreement, they can never cover the same ground as that of 'the body of Christ.'

That oneness is independent of our organisations, and even of our will, since it comes from the common possession of a common life. Its enemies are not divergent opinions or forms, but the evil tempers and dispositions which impede, or prevent, the flow into each Christian soul of the uniting 'Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' which makes the many who may be gathered into separate folds one flock clustered around the one Shepherd. And if that unity be thus a fundamental fact in the Christian life and entirely apart from external organisation, the true way to increase it in each individual is, plainly, the drawing nearer to Him, and the opening of our spirits so as to receive fuller, deeper, and more continuous inflows from His own inexhaustible fullness. In the old Temple stood the seven-branched candlestick, an emblem of a formal unity; in the new the seven candlesticks are one, because Christ stands in the midst. He makes the body one; without Him it is a carcase.

II. The diversity.

'We have many members in one body, but all members have not the same office.' Life has different functions in different organs. It is light in the eye, force in the arm, music on the

tongue, swiftness in the foot; so also is Christ. The higher a creature rises in the scale of life, the more are the parts differentiated. The lowest is a mere sac, which performs all the functions that the creature requires; the highest is a man with a multitude of organs, each of which is definitely limited to one office. In like manner the division of labour in society measures its advance; and in like manner in the Church there is to be the widest diversity. What the Apostle designates as ‘gifts’ are natural characteristics heightened by the Spirit of Christ; the effect of the common life in each ought to be the intensifying and manifestation of individuality of character. In the Christian ideal of humanity there is place for every variety of gifts. The flora of the Mountain of God yields an endless multiplicity of growths on its ascending slopes which pass through every climate. There ought to be a richer diversity in the Church than anywhere besides; that tree should ‘bear twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month for the healing of the nations.’ ‘All flesh is not the same flesh.’ ‘Star differeth from star in glory.’

The average Christian life of to-day sorely fails in two things: in being true to itself, and in tolerance of diversities. We are all so afraid of being ticketed as ‘eccentric,’ ‘odd,’ that we oftentimes stifle the genuine impulses of the Spirit of Christ leading us to the development of unfamiliar types of goodness, and the undertaking of unrecognised forms of service. If

we trusted in Christ in ourselves more, and took our laws from His whispers, we should often reach heights of goodness which tower above us now, and discover in ourselves capacities which slumber undiscerned. There is a dreary monotony and uniformity amongst us which impoverishes us, and weakens the testimony that we bear to the quickening influence of the Spirit that is in Christ Jesus; and we all tend to look very suspiciously at any man who 'puts all the others out' by being himself, and letting the life that he draws from the Lord dictate its own manner of expression. It would breathe a new life into all our Christian communities if we allowed full scope to the diversities of operation, and realised that in them all there was the one Spirit. The world condemns originality: the Church should have learned to prize it. 'One after this fashion, and one after that,' is the only wholesome law of the development of the manifold graces of the Christian life.

III. The harmony.

'We being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' That expression is remarkable, for we might have expected to read rather members *of the body*, than *of each other*; but the bringing in of such an idea suggests most emphatically that thought of the mutual relation of each part of the great whole, and that each has offices to discharge for the benefit of each. In the Christian community, as in an organised body, the active co-operation

of all the parts is the condition of health. All the rays into which the spectrum breaks up the pure white light must be gathered together again in order to produce it; just as every instrument in the great orchestra contributes to the volume of sound. The Lancashire hand-bell ringers may illustrate this point for us. Each man picks up his own bell from the table and sounds his own note at the moment prescribed by the score, and so the whole of the composer's idea is reproduced. To suppress diversities results in monotony; to combine them is the only sure way to secure harmony. Nor must we forget that the indwelling life of the Church can only be manifested by the full exhibition and freest possible play of all the forms which that life assumes in individual character. It needs all, and more than all, the types of mental characteristics that can be found in humanity to mirror the infinite beauty of the indwelling Lord. ‘There are diversities of operations,’ and all those diversities but partially represent that same Lord ‘who worketh all in all,’ and Himself is more than all, and, after all manifestation through human characters, remains hinted at rather than declared, suggested but not revealed.

Still further, only by the exercise of possible diversities is the one body nourished, for each member, drawing life directly and without the intervention of any other from Christ the Source, draws also from his fellow-Christian some form of the common life that to himself is unfamiliar, and needs human intervention in order to its

reception. Such dependence upon one's brethren is not inconsistent with a primal dependence on Christ alone, and is a safeguard against the cultivating of one's own idiosyncrasies till they become diseased and disproportionate. The most slenderly endowed Christian soul has the double charge of giving to, and receiving from, its brethren. We have all something which we can contribute to the general stock. We have all need to supplement our own peculiar gifts by brotherly ministration. The prime condition of Christian vitality has been set forth for ever by the gracious invitation, which is also an imperative command, 'Abide in Me and I in you'; but they who by such abiding are recipients of a communicated life are not thereby isolated, but united to all who like them have received 'the manifestation of the Spirit to do good with.'

GRACE AND GRACES

'Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with

> diligence; he that showeth mercy,
> with cheerfulness.'—ROMANS xii.
> 6-8.

The Apostle here proceeds to build upon the great thought of the unity of believers in the one body a series of practical exhortations. In the first words of our text, he, with characteristic delicacy, identifies himself with the Roman Christians as a recipient, like them, of 'the grace that is given to us,' and as, therefore, subject to the same precepts which he commends to them. He does not stand isolated by the grace that is given to him; nor does he look down as from the height of his apostleship on the multitude below, saying to them,—Go. As one of themselves he stands amongst them, and with brotherly exhortation says,—Come. If that had been the spirit in which all Christian teachers had besought men, their exhortations would less frequently have been breath spent in vain.

We may note

I. The grace that gives the gifts.

The connection between these two is more emphatically suggested by the original Greek, in which the word for 'gifts' is a derivative of that for 'grace.' The relation between these two can scarcely be verbally reproduced in English; but it may be, though imperfectly, suggested by reading 'graces' instead of 'gifts.' The gifts are represented as being the direct product of, and cognate with, the grace bestowed. As we have

had already occasion to remark, they are in Paul's language a designation of natural capacities strengthened by the access of the life of the Spirit of Christ. As a candle plunged in a vase of oxygen leaps up into more brilliant flame, so all the faculties of the human soul are made a hundred times themselves when the quickening power of the life of Christ enters into them.

It is to be observed that the Apostle here assumes that every Christian possesses, in some form, that grace which gives graces. To him a believing soul without Christ-given gifts is a monstrosity. No one is without some graces, and therefore no one is without some duties. No one who considers the multitude of professing Christians who hamper all our churches to-day, and reflects on the modern need to urge on the multitude of idlers forms of Christian activity, will fail to recognise signs of terribly weakened vitality. The humility, which in response to all invitations to work for Christ pleads unfitness is, if true, more tragical than it at first seems, for it is a confession that the man who alleges it has no real hold of the Christ in whom he professes to trust. If a Christian man is fit for no Christian work, it is time that he gravely ask himself whether he has any Christian life. ‘Having gifts’ is the basis of all the Apostle's exhortations. It is to him inconceivable that any Christian should not possess, and be conscious of possessing, some endowment from the life of Christ which will fit him for, and bind him to, a course of

active service.

The universality of this possession is affirmed, if we note that, according to the Greek, it was ‘given’ at a special time in the experience of each of these Roman Christians. The rendering ‘was given’ might be more accurately exchanged for ‘has been given,’ and that expression is best taken as referring to a definite moment in the history of each believer namely, his conversion. When we ‘yield ourselves to God,’ as Paul exhorts us to do in the beginning of this chapter, as the commencement of all true life of conformity to His will, Christ yields Himself to us. The possession of these gifts of grace is no prerogative of officials; and, indeed, in all the exhortations which follow there is no reference to officials, though of course such were in existence in the Roman Church. They had their special functions and special qualifications for these. But what Paul is dealing with now is the grace that is inseparable from individual surrender to Christ, and has been bestowed upon all who are His. To limit the gifts to officials, and to suppose that the universal gifts in any degree militate against the recognition of officials in the Church, are equally mistakes, and confound essentially different subjects.

II. The graces that flow from the grace.

The Apostle's catalogue of these is not exhaustive, nor logically arranged; but yet a certain loose order may be noted, which may be

profitable for us to trace. They are in number seven—the sacred number; and are capable of being divided, as so many of the series of sevens are, into two portions, one containing four and the other three. The former include more public works, to each of which a man might be specially devoted as his life work for and in the Church. Three are more private, and may be conceived to have a wider relation to the world. There are some difficulties of construction and rendering in the list, which need not concern us here; and we may substantially follow the Authorised Version.

The first group of four seems to fall into two pairs, the first of which, ‘prophecy’ and ‘ministry,’ seem to be bracketed together by reason of the difference between them. Prophecy is a very high form of special inspiration, and implies a direct reception of special revelation, but not necessarily of future events. The prophet is usually coupled in Paul's writings with the apostle, and was obviously amongst those to whom was given one of the highest forms of the gifts of Christ. It is very beautiful to note that by natural contrast the Apostle at once passes to one of the forms of service which a vulgar estimate would regard as remotest from the special revelation of the prophet, and is confined to lowly service. Side by side with the exalted gift of prophecy Paul puts the lowly gift of ministry. Very significant is the juxtaposition of these two extremes. It teaches us that the lowliest office is as truly allotted by Jesus as the

most sacred, and that His highest gifts find an adequate field for manifestation in him who is servant of all. Ministry to be rightly discharged needs spiritual character. The original seven were men ‘full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,’ though all they had to do was to hand their pittances to poor widows. It may be difficult to decide for what reason other than the emphasising of this contrast the Apostle links together ministry and prophecy, and so breaks a natural sequence which would have connected the second pair of graces with the first member of the first pair. We should have expected that here, as elsewhere, ‘prophet,’ ‘teacher,’ ‘exhorter,’ would have been closely connected, and there seems no reason why they should not have been so, except that which we have suggested, namely, the wish to bring together the highest and the lowest forms of service.

The second pair seem to be linked together by likeness. The ‘teacher’ probably had for his function, primarily, the narration of the facts of the Gospel, and the setting forth in a form addressed chiefly to the understanding the truths thereby revealed; whilst the ‘exhorter’ rather addressed himself to the will, presenting the same truth, but in forms more intended to influence the emotions. The word here rendered ‘exhort’ is found in Paul's writings as bearing special meanings, such as consoling, stimulating, encouraging, rebuking and others. Of course these two forms of service would often be associated, and each would be imperfect when

alone; but it would appear that in the early Church there were persons in whom the one or the other of these two elements was so preponderant that their office was thereby designated. Each received a special gift from the one Source. The man who could only say to his brother, ‘Be of good cheer,’ was as much the recipient of the Spirit as the man who could connect and elaborate a systematic presentation of the truths of the Gospel.

These four graces are followed by a group of three, which may be regarded as being more private, as not pointing to permanent offices so much as to individual acts. They are ‘giving,’ ‘ruling,’ ‘showing pity,’ concerning which we need only note that the second of these can hardly be the ecclesiastical office, and that it stands between two which are closely related, as if it were of the same kind. The gifts of money, or of direction, or of pity, are one in kind. The right use of wealth comes from the gift of God's grace; so does the right use of any sway which any of us have over any of our brethren; and so does the glow of compassion, the exercise of the natural human sympathy which belongs to all, and is deepened and made tenderer and intenser by the gift of the Spirit. It would be a very different Church, and a very different world, if Christians, who were not conscious of possessing gifts which made them fit to be either prophets, or teachers, or exhorters, and were scarcely endowed even for any special form of ministry, felt that a gift from their hands, or a wave of

pity from their hearts, was a true token of the movement of God's Spirit on their spirits. The fruit of the Spirit is to be found in the wide fields of everyday life, and the vine bears many clusters for the thirsty lips of wearied men who may little know what gives them their bloom and sweetness. It would be better for both giver and receiver if Christian beneficence were more clearly recognised as one of the manifestations of spiritual life.

III. The exercise of the graces.

There are some difficulties in reference to the grammatical construction of the words of our text, into which it is not necessary that we should enter here. We may substantially follow the Authorised and Revised Versions in supplying verbs in the various clauses, so as to make of the text a series of exhortations. The first of these is to ‘prophesy according to the proportion of faith’; a commandment which is best explained by remembering that in the preceding verse ‘the measure of faith’ has been stated as being the measure of the gifts. The prophet then is to exercise his gifts in proportion to his faith. He is to speak his convictions fully and openly, and to let his utterances be shaped by the indwelling life. This exhortation may well sink into the heart of preachers in this day. It is but the echo of Jeremiah's strong words: ‘He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as fire, saith the Lord, and like

a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' The ancient prophet's woe falls with double weight on those who use their words as a veil to obscure their real beliefs, and who prophesy, not 'according to the proportion of faith,' but according to the expectations of the hearers, whose faith is as vague as theirs.

In the original, the next three exhortations are alike in grammatical construction, which is represented in the Authorised Version by the supplement 'let us wait on,' and in the Revised Version by 'let us give ourselves to'; we might with advantage substitute for either the still more simple form 'be in,' after the example of Paul's exhortation to Timothy 'be in these things'; that is, as our Version has it, 'give thyself wholly to them.' The various gifts are each represented as a sphere within which its possessor is to move, for the opportunities for the exercise of which he is carefully to watch, and within the limits of which he is humbly to keep. That general law applies equally to ministry, and teaching and exhorting. We are to seek to discern our spheres; we are to be occupied with, if not absorbed in, them. At the least we are diligently to use the gift which we discover ourselves to possess, and thus filling our several spheres, we are to keep within them, recognising that each is sacred as the manifestation of God's will for each of us. The divergence of forms is unimportant, and it matters nothing whether 'the Giver of all' grants less or more. The main thing is that each be

faithful in the administration of what he has received, and not seek to imitate his brother who is diversely endowed, or to monopolise for himself another's gifts. To insist that our brethren's gifts should be like ours, and to try to make ours like theirs, are equally sins against the great truth, of which the Church as a whole is the example, that there are ‘diversities of operations but the same Spirit.’

The remaining three exhortations are in like manner thrown together by a similarity of construction in which the personality of the doer is put in the foreground, and the emphasis of the commandment is rested on the manner in which the grace is exercised. The reason for that may be that in these three especially the manner will show the grace. ‘Giving’ is to be ‘with simplicity.’ There are to be no sidelong looks to self-interest; no flinging of a gift from a height, as a bone might be flung to a dog; no seeking for gratitude; no ostentation in the gift. Any taint of such mixed motives as these infuses poison into our gifts, and makes them taste bitter to the receiver, and recoil in hurt upon ourselves. To ‘give with simplicity’ is to give as God gives.

‘Diligence’ is the characteristic prescribed for the man that rules. We have already pointed out that this exhortation includes a much wider area than that of any ecclesiastical officials. It points to another kind of rule, and the natural gifts needed for any kind of rule are diligence and zeal. Slackly-held reins make stumbling steeds;

and any man on whose shoulders is laid the weight of government is bound to feel it as a weight. The history of many a nation, and of many a family, teaches that where the rule is slothful all evils grow apace; and it is that natural energy and earnestness, deepened and hallowed by the Christian life, which here is enjoined as the true Christian way of discharging the function of ruling, which, in some form or another, devolves on almost all of us.

'He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness.' The glow of natural human sympathy is heightened so as to become a 'gift,' and the way in which it is exercised is defined as being 'with cheerfulness.' That injunction is but partially understood if it is taken to mean no more than that sympathy is not to be rendered grudgingly, or as by necessity. No sympathy is indeed possible on such terms; unless the heart is in it, it is nought. And that it should thus flow forth spontaneously wherever sorrow and desolation evoke it, there must be a continual repression of self, and a heart disengaged from the entanglements of its own circumstances, and at leisure to make a brother's burden its very own. But the exhortation may, perhaps, rather mean that the truest sympathy carries a bright face into darkness, and comes like sunshine in a shady place.

LOVE THAT CAN HATE

> ‘Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10. In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honour preferring one another.’—ROMANS xii. 9-10 (R. V.).

Thus far the Apostle has been laying down very general precepts and principles of Christian morals. Starting with the one all-comprehensive thought of self-sacrifice as the very foundation of all goodness, of transformation as its method, and of the clear knowledge of our several powers and faithful stewardship of these, as its conditions, he here proceeds to a series of more specific exhortations, which at first sight seem to be very unconnected, but through which there may be discerned a sequence of thought.

The clauses of our text seem at first sight strangely disconnected. The first and the last belong to the same subject, but the intervening clause strikes a careless reader as out of place and heterogeneous. I think that we shall see it is not so; but for the present we but note that here are three sets of precepts which enjoin, first, honest love; then, next, a healthy vehemence against evil and for good; and finally, a brotherly affection and mutual respect.

I. Let love be honest.

Love stands at the head, and is the fontal source of all separate individualised duties. Here Paul is not so much prescribing love as describing the kind of love which he recognises as genuine, and the main point on which he insists is sincerity. The ‘dissimulation’ of the Authorised Version only covers half the ground. It means, hiding what one is; but there is simulation, or pretending to be what one is not. There are words of love which are like the iridescent scum on the surface veiling the black depths of a pool of hatred. A Psalmist complains of having to meet men whose words were ‘smoother than butter’ and whose true feelings were as ‘drawn swords’; but, short of such consciously lying love, we must all recognise as a real danger besetting us all, and especially those of us who are naturally inclined to kindly relations with our fellows, the tendency to use language just a little in excess of our feelings. The glove is slightly stretched, and the hand in it is not quite large enough to fill it. There is such a thing, not altogether unknown in Christian circles, as benevolence, which is largely cant, and words of conventional love about individuals which do not represent any corresponding emotion. Such effusive love pours itself in words, and is most generally the token of intense selfishness. Any man who seeks to make his words a true picture of his emotions must be aware that few harder precepts have ever been given than this brief one of the Apostle's, ‘Let love be without hypocrisy.’

But the place where this exhortation comes in the apostolic sequence here may suggest to us the discipline through which obedience to it is made possible. There is little to be done by the way of directly increasing either the fervour of love or the honesty of its expression. The true method of securing both is to be growingly transformed by 'the renewing of our minds,' and growingly to bring our whole old selves under the melting and softening influence of 'the mercies of God.' It is swollen self-love, 'thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think,' which impedes the flow of love to others, and it is in the measure in which we receive into our minds 'the mind that was in Christ Jesus,' and look at men as He did, that we shall come to love them all honestly and purely. When we are delivered from the monstrous oppression and tyranny of self, we have hearts capable of a Christlike and Christ-giving love to all men, and only they who have cleansed their hearts by union with Him, and by receiving into them the purging influence of His own Spirit, will be able to love without hypocrisy.

II. Let love abhor what is evil, and cleave to what is good.

If we carefully consider this apparently irrelevant interruption in the sequence of the apostolic exhortations, we shall, I think, see at once that the irrelevance is only apparent, and that the healthy vehemence against evil and resolute clinging to good is as essential to the

noblest forms of Christian love as is the sincerity enjoined in the previous clause. To detest the one and hold fast by the other are essential to the purity and depth of our love. Evil is to be loathed, and good to be clung to in our own moral conduct, and wherever we see them. These two precepts are not mere tautology, but the second of them is the ground of the first. The force of our recoil from the bad will be measured by the firmness of our grasp of the good; and yet, though inseparably connected, the one is apt to be easier to obey than is the other. There are types of Christian men to whom it is more natural to abhor the evil than to cleave to the good; and there are types of character of which the converse is true. We often see men very earnest and entirely sincere in their detestation of meanness and wickedness, but very tepid in their appreciation of goodness. To hate is, unfortunately, more congenial with ordinary characters than to love; and it is more facile to look down on badness than to look up at goodness.

But it needs ever to be insisted upon, and never more than in this day of spurious charity and unprincipled toleration, that a healthy hatred of moral evil and of sin, wherever found and however garbed, ought to be the continual accompaniment of all vigorous and manly cleaving to that which is good. Unless we shudderingly recoil from contact with the bad in our own lives, and refuse to christen it with deceptive euphemisms when we meet it in social

and civil life, we shall but feebly grasp, and slackly hold, that which is good. Such energy of moral recoil from evil is perfectly consistent with honest love, for it is things, not men, that we are to hate; and it is needful as the completion and guardian of love itself. There is always danger that love shall weaken the condemnation of wrong, and modern liberality, both in the field of opinion and in regard to practical life, has so far condoned evil as largely to have lost its hold upon good. The criminal is pitied rather than blamed, and a multitude of agencies are so occupied in elevating the wrong-doers that they lose sight of the need of punishing.

Nor is it only in reference to society that this tendency works harm. The effect of it is abundantly manifest in the fashionable ideas of God and His character. There are whole schools of opinion which practically strike out of their ideal of the Divine Nature abhorrence of evil, and, little as they think it, are thereby fatally impoverishing their ideal of God, and making it impossible to understand His government of the world. As always, so in this matter, the authentic revelation of the Divine Nature, and the perfect pattern for the human are to be found in Jesus Christ. We recall that wonderful incident, when on His last approach to Jerusalem, rounding the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, He beheld the city, gleaming in the morning sunshine across the valley, and forgetting His own sorrow, shed tears over its approaching desolation, which yet

He steadfastly pronounced. His loathing of evil was whole-souled and absolute, and equally intense and complete was His cleaving to that which is good. In both, and in the harmony between them, He makes God known, and prescribes and holds forth the ideal of perfect humanity to men.

III. Let sincere and discriminating love be concentrated on Christian men.

In the final exhortation of our text 'the love of the brethren' takes the place of the more diffused and general love enjoined in the first clause. The expression 'kindly affectioned' is the rendering of a very eloquent word in the original in which the instinctive love of a mother to her child, or the strange mystical ties which unite members of a family together, irrespective of their differences of character and temperament, are taken as an example after which Christian men are to mould their relations to one another. The love which is without hypocrisy, and is to be diffused on all sides, is also to be gathered together and concentrated with special energy on all who 'call upon Jesus Christ as Lord, both their Lord and ours.' The more general precept and the more particular are in perfect harmony, however our human weakness sometimes confuses them. It is obvious that this final precept of our text will be the direct result of the two preceding, for the love which has learned to be moral, hating evil, and clinging to good as necessary, when directed to possessors of like

precious faith will thrill with the consciousness of a deep mystical bond of union, and will effloresce in all brotherly love and kindly affections. They who are like one another in the depths of their moral life, who are touched by like aspirations after like holy things, and who instinctively recoil with similar revulsion from like abominations, will necessarily feel the drawing of a unity far deeper and sacreder than any superficial likenesses of race, or circumstance, or opinion. Two men who share, however imperfectly, in Christ's Spirit are more akin in the realities of their nature, however they may differ on the surface, than either of them is to another, however like he may seem, who is not a partaker in the life of Christ.

This instinctive, Christian love, like all true and pure love, is to manifest itself by ‘preferring one another in honour’; or as the word might possibly be rendered, ‘anticipating one another.’ We are not to wait to have our place assigned before we give our brother his. There will be no squabbling for the chief seat in the synagogue, or the uppermost rooms at the feast, where brotherly love marshals the guests. The one cure for petty jealousies and the miserable strife for recognition, which we are all tempted to engage in, lies in a heart filled with love of the brethren because of its love to the Elder Brother of them all, and to the Father who is His Father as well as ours. What a contrast is presented between the practice of Christians and these precepts of Paul! We may well bow ourselves in shame and

contrition when we read these clear-drawn lines indicating what we ought to be, and set by the side of them the blurred and blotted pictures of what we are. It is a painful but profitable task to measure ourselves against Paul's ideal of Christ's commandment; but it will only be profitable if it brings us to remember that Christ gives before He commands, and that conformity with His ideal must begin, not with details of conduct, or with emotion, however pure, but with yielding ourselves to the God who moves us by His mercies, and being 'transformed by the renewing of our minds' and 'the indwelling of Christ in our hearts by faith.'

A TRIPLET OF GRACES

> 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.'—ROMANS xii. 11.

Paul believed that Christian doctrine was meant to influence Christian practice; and therefore, after the fundamental and profound exhibition of the central truths of Christianity which occupies the earlier portion of this great Epistle, he tacks on, with a 'therefore' to his theological exposition, a series of plain, practical teachings. The place where conduct comes in the letter is profoundly significant, and, if the significance of it had been observed and the spirit of it carried into practice, there would

have been less of a barren orthodoxy, and fewer attempts at producing righteous conduct without faith.

But not only is the place where this series of exhortations occur very significant, but the order in which they appear is also instructive. The great principle which covers all conduct, and may be broken up into all the minutenesses of practical directions is self-surrender. Give yourselves up to God; that is the Alpha and the Omega of all goodness, and wherever that foundation is really laid, on it will rise the fair building of a life which is a temple, adorned with whatever things are lovely and of good report. So after Paul has laid deep and broad the foundation of all Christian virtue in his exhortation to present ourselves as living sacrifices, he goes on to point out the several virtues in which such self-surrender will manifest itself. There runs through the most of these exhortations an arrangement in triplets—three sister Graces linked together hand-in-hand as it were—and my text presents an example of that threefoldness in grouping. ‘Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.’

I. We have, first, the prime grace of Christian diligence.

‘Not slothful in business’ suggests, by reason of our modern restriction of that word ‘business’ to a man's daily occupation, a much more limited range to this exhortation than the

Apostle meant to give it. The idea which is generally drawn from these words by English readers is that they are to do their ordinary work diligently, and, all the while, notwithstanding the cooling or distracting influences of their daily avocations, are to keep themselves ‘fervent in spirit.’ That is a noble and needful conception of the command, but it does not express what is in the Apostle's mind. He does not mean by ‘business’ a trade or profession, or daily occupation. But the word means ‘zeal’ or ‘earnestness.’ And what Paul says is just this—‘In regard to your earnestness in all directions, see that you are not slothful.’

The force and drift of the whole precept is just the exhortation to exercise the very homely virtue of diligence, which is as much a condition of growth and maturity in the Christian as it is in any other life. The very homeliness and obviousness of the duty causes us often to lose sight of its imperativeness and necessity.

Many of us, if we would sit quietly down and think of how we go about our ‘business,’ as we call it, and of how we go about our Christian life, which ought to be our highest business, would have great cause for being ashamed. We begin the one early in the morning, we keep hard at it all day, our eyes are wide open to see any opening where money is to be made; that is all right. We give our whole selves to our work whilst we are at it; that is as it should be. But why are there not the same concentration, the

same wide-awakeness, the same open-eyed eagerness to find out ways of advancement, the same resolved and continuous and all-comprehending and dominating enthusiasm about our Christianity as there is about our shop, or our mill, or our success as students? Why are we all fire in the one case and all ice in the other? Why do we think that it is enough to lift the burden that Christ lays upon us with one languid finger, and to put our whole hand, or rather, as the prophet says, 'both hands earnestly,' to the task of lifting the load of daily work? 'In your earnestness be not slothful.'

Brethren, that is a very homely exhortation. I wonder how many of us can say, 'Lord! I have heard, and I have obeyed Thy precept.'

II. Diligence must be fed by a fervent spirit.

The word translated 'fervent' is literally boiling. The metaphor is very plain and intelligible. The spirit brought into contact with Christian truth and with the fire of the Holy Spirit will naturally have its temperature raised, and will be moved by the warm touch as heat makes water in a pot hung above a fire boil. Such emotion, produced by the touch of the fiery Spirit of God, is what Paul desires for, and enjoins on, all Christians; for such emotion is the only way by which the diligence, without which no Christian progress will be made, can be kept up.

No man will work long at a task that his heart

is not in; or if he does, because he is obliged, the work will be slavery. In order, then, that diligence may neither languish and become slothfulness, nor be felt to be a heavy weight and an unwelcome necessity, Paul here bids us see to it that our hearts are moved because there is a fire below which makes 'the soul's depths boil in earnest.'

Now, of course, I know that, as a great teacher has told us, 'The gods approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul,' and I know that there is a great deal of emotional Christianity which is worth nothing. But it is not that kind of fervour that the Apostle is enjoining here. Whilst it is perfectly true that mere emotion often does co-exist with, and very often leads to, entire negligence as to possessing and manifesting practical excellence, the true relation between these is just the opposite—viz. that this fervour of which I speak, this wide-awakeness and enthusiasm of a spirit all quickened into rapidity of action by the warmth which it has felt from God in Christ, should drive the wheels of life. Boiling water makes steam, does it not? And what is to be done with the steam that comes off the 'boiling' spirit? You may either let it go roaring through a waste-pipe and do nothing but make a noise and be idly dissipated in the air, or you may lead it into a cylinder and make it lift a piston, and then you will get work out of it. That is what the Apostle desires us to do with our emotion. The lightning goes careering through the sky, but we have harnessed it to tram-cars

nowadays, and made it ‘work for its living,’ to carry our letters and light our rooms. Fervour of a Christian spirit is all right when it is yoked to Christian work, and made to draw what else is a heavy chariot. It is not emotion, but it is indolent emotion, that is the curse of much of our ‘fervent’ Christianity.

There cannot be too much fervour. There may be too little outlet provided for the fervour to work in. It may all go off in comfortable feeling, in enthusiastic prayers and ‘Amens!’ and ‘So be it, Lords!’ and the like, or it may come with us into our daily tasks, and make us buckle to with more earnestness, and more continuity. Diligence driven by earnestness, and fervour that works, are the true things.

And surely, surely there cannot be any genuine Christianity—certainly there cannot be any deep Christianity—which is not fervent.

We hear from certain quarters of the Church a great deal about the virtue of moderation. But it seems to me that, if you take into account what Christianity tells us, the ‘sober’ feeling is fervent feeling, and tepid feeling is imperfect feeling. I cannot understand any man believing as plain matter-of-fact the truths on which the whole New Testament insists, and keeping himself ‘cool,’ or, as our friends call it, ‘moderate.’ Brethren, enthusiasm—which properly means the condition of being dwelt in by a god—is the wise, the reasonable attitude of Christian men, if

they believe their own Christianity and are really serving Jesus Christ. They should be ‘diligent in business, fervent’—boiling—in spirit.

III. The diligence and the fervency are both to be animated by the thought, ‘Serving the Lord!’

Some critics, as many of you know, no doubt, would prefer to read this verse in its last clause ‘serving the time.’ But that seems to me a very lame and incomplete climax for the Apostle's thought, and it breaks entirely the sequence which, as I think, is discernible in it. Much rather, he here, in the closing member of the triplet, suggests a thought which will be stimulus to the diligence and fuel to the fire that makes the spirit boil.

In effect he says, ‘Think, when your hands begin to droop, and when your spirits begin to be cold and indifferent, and languor to steal over you, and the paralysing influences of the commonplace and the familiar, and the small begin to assert themselves—think that you are serving the Lord.’ Will that not freshen you up? Will that not set you boiling again? Will it not be easy to be diligent when we feel that we are ‘ever in the great Taskmaster's eye’? There are many reasons for diligence—the greatness of the work, for it is no small matter for us to get the whole lump of our nature leavened with the good leaven; the continual operation of antagonistic forces which are all round us, and are working night-shifts as well as day ones,

whether we as Christians are on short time or not, the brevity of the period during which we have to work, and the tremendous issues which depend upon the completeness of our service here—all these things are reasons for our diligence. But *the* reason is: 'Thou Christ hast died for me, and livest for me; truly I am Thy slave.' That is the thought that will make a man bend his back to his work, whatever it be, and bend his will to his work, too, however unwelcome it may be; and that is the thought that will stir his whole spirit to fervour and earnestness, and thus will deliver him from the temptations to languid and perfunctory work that ever creep over us.

You can carry that motive—as we all know, and as we all forget when the pinch comes—into your shop, your study, your office, your mill, your kitchen, or wherever you go. 'On the bells of the horses there shall be written, Holiness to the Lord,' said the prophet, and 'every bowl in Jerusalem' may be sacred as the vessels of the altar. All life may flash into beauty, and tower into greatness, and be smoothed out into easiness, and the crooked things may be made straight and the rough places plain, and the familiar and the trite be invested with freshness and wonder as of a dream, if only we write over them, 'For the sake of the Master.' Then, whatever we do or bear, be it common, insignificant, or unpleasant, will change its aspect, and all will be sweet. Here is the secret of diligence and of fervency, 'I set the Lord

always before me.'

ANOTHER TRIPLET OF GRACES

> 'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.'—ROMANS xii. 12.

These three closely connected clauses occur, as you all know, in the midst of that outline of the Christian life with which the Apostle begins the practical part of this Epistle. Now, what he omits in this sketch of Christian duty seems to me quite as significant as what he inserts. It is very remarkable that in the twenty verses devoted to this subject, this is the only one which refers to the inner secrets of the Christian life. Paul's notion of 'deepening the spiritual life' was 'Behave yourself better in your relation to other people.' So all the rest of this chapter is devoted to inculcating our duties to one another. Conduct is all-important. An orthodox creed is valuable if it influences action, but not otherwise. Devout emotion is valuable, if it drives the wheels of life, but not otherwise. Christians should make efforts to attain to clear views and warm feelings, but the outcome and final test of both is a daily life of visible imitation of Jesus. The deepening of spiritual life should be manifested by completer, practical righteousness in the market-place and the street and the house, which non-Christians will

acknowledge.

But now, with regard to these three specific exhortations here, I wish to try to bring out their connection as well as the force of each of them.

I. So I remark first, that the Christian life ought to be joyful because it is hopeful.

Now, I do not suppose that many of us habitually recognise it as a Christian duty to be joyful. We think that it is a matter of temperament and partly a matter of circumstance. We are glad when things go well with us. If we have a sunny disposition, and are naturally light-hearted, all the better; if we have a melancholy or morose one, all the worse. But do we recognise this, that a Christian who is not joyful is not living up to his duty; and that there is no excuse, either in temperament or in circumstances, for our not being so, and always being so? 'Rejoice in the Lord alway,' says Paul; and then, as if he thought, 'Some of you will be thinking that that is a very rash commandment, to aim at a condition quite impossible to make constant,' he goes on—'and, to convince you that I do not say it hastily, I will repeat it—"and again I say, rejoice."' Brethren, we shall have to alter our conceptions of what true gladness is before we can come to understand the full depth of the great thought that joy is a Christian duty. The true joy is not the kind of joy that a saying in the Old Testament compares to the 'crackling of thorns under a pot,' but something very much

calmer, with no crackle in it; and very much deeper, and very much more in alliance with ‘whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,’ than that foolish, short-lived, and empty mirth that burns down so soon into black ashes.

To be glad is a Christian duty. Many of us have as much religion as makes us sombre, and impels us often to look upon the more solemn and awful aspects of Christian truth, but we have not enough to make us glad. I do not need to dwell upon all the sources in Christian faith and belief, of that lofty and imperatively obligatory gladness, but I confine myself to the one in my text, ‘Rejoicing in hope.’

Now, we all know—from the boy that is expecting to go home for his holidays in a week, up to the old man to whose eye the time-veil is wearing thin—that hope, if it is certain, is a source of gladness. How lightly one's bosom's lord sits upon its throne, when a great hope comes to animate us! how everybody is pleasant, and all things are easy, and the world looks different! Hope, if it is certain, will gladden, and if our Christianity grasps, as it ought to do, the only hope that is absolutely certain, and as sure as if it were in the past and had been experienced, then our hearts, too, will sing for joy. True joy is *not* a matter of temperament, so much as a matter of faith. It is *not* a matter of circumstances. All the surface drainage may be dry, but there is a well in the courtyard deep and cool and full and exhaustless, and a

Christian who rightly understands and cherishes the Christian hope is lifted above temperament, and is not dependent upon conditions for his joys.

The Apostle, in an earlier part of this same letter, defines for us what that hope is, which thus is the secret of perpetual gladness, when he speaks about 'rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' Yes, it is that great, supreme, calm, far off, absolutely certain prospect of being gathered into the divine glory, and walking there, like the three in the fiery furnace, unconsumed and at ease; it is that hope that will triumph over temperament, and over all occasions for melancholy, and will breathe into our life a perpetual gladness. Brethren, is it not strange and sad that with such a treasure by our sides we should consent to live such poor lives as we do?

But remember, although I cannot say to myself, 'Now I will be glad,' and cannot attain to joy by a movement of the will or direct effort, although it is of no use to say to a man—which is all that the world can ever say to him—'Cheer up and be glad,' whilst you do not alter the facts that make him sad, there is a way by which we can bring about feelings of gladness or of gloom. It is just this—we can choose what we will look at. If you prefer to occupy your mind with the troubles, losses, disappointments, hard work, blighted hopes of this poor sin-ridden world, of course sadness will come over you often, and a

general grey tone will be the usual tone of your lives, as it is of the lives of many of us, broken only by occasional bursts of foolish mirth and empty laughter. But if you choose to turn away from all these, and instead of the dim, dismal, hard present, to sun yourselves in the light of the yet unrisen sun, which you can do, then, having rightly chosen the subjects to think about, the feeling will come as a matter of course. You cannot make yourselves glad by, as it were, laying hold of yourselves and lifting yourselves into gladness, but you can rule the direction of your thoughts, and so can bring around you summer in the midst of winter, by steadily contemplating the facts—and they are present facts, though we talk about them collectively as 'the future'—the facts on which all Christian gladness ought to be based. We can carry our own atmosphere with us; like the people in Italy, who in frosty weather will be seen sitting in the market-place by their stalls with a dish of embers, which they grasp in their hands, and so make themselves comfortably warm on the bitterest day. You can bring a reasonable degree of warmth into the coldest weather, if you will lay hold of the vessel in which the fire is, and keep it in your hand and close to your heart. Choose what you think about, and feelings will follow thoughts.

But it needs very distinct and continuous effort for a man to keep this great source of Christian joy clear before him. We are like the dwellers in some island of the sea, who, in some

conditions of the atmosphere, can catch sight of the gleaming mountain-tops on the mainland across the stormy channel between. But thick days, with a heavy atmosphere and much mist, are very frequent in our latitude, and then all the distant hills are blotted out, and we see nothing but the cold grey sea, breaking on the cold, grey stones. Still, you can scatter the mist if you will. You can make the atmosphere bright; and it is worth an effort to bring clear before us, and to keep high above the mists that cling to the low levels, the great vision which will make us glad. Brethren, I believe that one great source of the weakness of average Christianity amongst us to-day is the dimness into which so many of us have let the hope of the glory of God pass in our hearts. So I beg you to lay to heart this first commandment, and to rejoice in hope.

II. Now, secondly, here is the thought that life, if full of joyful hope, will be patient.

I have been saying that the gladness of which my text speaks is independent of circumstances, and may persist and be continuous even when externals occasion sadness. It is possible—I do not say it is easy, God knows it is hard—I do not say it is frequently attained, but I do say it is possible—to realise that wonderful ideal of the Apostle's ‘As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.’ The surface of the ocean may be tossed and fretted by the winds, and churned into foam, but the great central depths ‘hear not the loud winds when they call,’ and are still in the midst of

tempest. And we, dear brethren, ought to have an inner depth of spirit, down to the disturbance of which no surface-trouble can ever reach. That is the height of attainment of Christian faith, but it is a possible attainment for every one of us.

And if there be that burning of the light under the water, like 'Greek fire,' as it was called, which many waters could not quench—if there be that persistence of gladness beneath the surface-sorrow, as you find a running stream coming out below a glacier, then the joy and the hope, which co-exist with the sorrow, will make life patient.

Now, the Apostle means by these great words, 'patient' and 'patience,' which are often upon his lips, something more than simple endurance. That endurance is as much as many of us can often muster up strength to exercise. It sometimes takes all our faith and all our submission simply to say, 'I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it; and I will bear what thine hand lays upon me.' But that is not all that the idea of Christian 'patience' includes, for it also takes in the thought of active work, and it is *perseverance* as much as *patience*.

Now, if my heart is filled with a calm gladness because my eye is fixed upon a celestial hope, then both the passive and active sides of Christian 'patience' will be realised by me. If my hope burns bright, and occupies a large space in my thoughts, then it will not be hard to take the

homely consolation of good John Newton's hymn and say—

'Though painful at present,
  'Twill cease before long;
And then, oh, how pleasant
  The conqueror's song!'

A man who is sailing to America, and knows that he will be in New York in a week, does not mind, although his cabin is contracted, and he has a great many discomforts, and though he has a bout of sea-sickness. The disagreeables are only going to last for a day or two. So our hope will make us bear trouble, and not make much of it.

And our hope will strengthen us, if it is strong, for all the work that is to be done. Persistence in the path of duty, though my heart be beating like a smith's hammer on the anvil, is what Christian men should aim at, and possess. If we have within our hearts that fire of a certain hope, it will impel us to diligence in doing the humblest duty, whether circumstances be for or against us; as some great steamer is driven right on its course, through the ocean, whatever storms may blow in the teeth of its progress, because, deep down in it, there are furnaces and boilers which supply the steam that drives the engines. So a life that is joyful because it is hopeful will be full of calm endurance and strenuous work. ‘Rejoicing in hope; patient,’ persevering in tribulation.

III. Lastly, our lives will be joyful, hopeful, and patient, in proportion as they are prayerful.

'Continuing instant'—which, of course, just means steadfast—'in prayer.' Paul uttered a paradox when he said, 'Rejoice in the Lord alway,' as he said long before this verse, in the very first letter that he ever wrote, or at least the first which has come down to us. There he bracketed it along with two other equally paradoxical sayings. 'Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.' If you pray without ceasing you can rejoice without ceasing.

But can I pray without ceasing? Not if by prayer you mean only words of supplication and petition, but if by prayer you mean also a mental attitude of devotion, and a kind of sub-conscious reference to God in all that you do, such unceasing prayer is possible. Do not let us blunt the edge of this commandment, and weaken our own consciousness of having failed to obey it, by getting entangled in the cobwebs of mere curious discussions as to whether the absolute ideal of perfectly unbroken communion with God is possible in this life. At all events it is possible to us to approximate to that ideal a great deal more closely than our consciences tell us that we ever yet have done. If we are trying to keep our hearts in the midst of daily duty in contact with God, and if, ever and anon in the press of our work, we cast a thought towards Him and a prayer, then joy and hope and

patience will come to us, in a degree that we do not know much about yet, but might have known all about long, long ago.

There is a verse in the Old Testament which we may well lay to heart: 'They cried unto God in the battle, and He was entreated of them.' Well, what sort of a prayer do you think that would be? Suppose that you were standing in the thick of battle with the sword of an enemy at your throat, there would not be much time for many words of prayer, would there? But the cry could go up, and the thought could go up, and as they went up, down would come the strong buckler which God puts between His servants and all evil. That is the sort of prayer that you, in the battle of business, in your shops and counting-houses and warehouses and mills, we students in our studies, and you mothers in your families and your kitchens, can send up to heaven. If thus we 'pray without ceasing,' then we shall 'rejoice evermore,' and our souls will be kept in patience and filled with the peace of God.

STILL ANOTHER TRIPLET

'Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them

that weep.'—ROMANS xii. 13-15.

In these verses we pass from the innermost region of communion with God into the wide field of duties in relation to men. The solitary secrecies of rejoicing hope, endurance, and prayer unbroken, are exchanged for the publicities of benevolence and sympathy. In the former verses the Christian soul is in 'the secret place of the Most High'; in those of our text he comes forth with the light of God on his face, and hands laden with blessings. The juxtaposition of the two suggests the great principles to which the morality of the New Testament is ever true—that devotion to God is the basis of all practical helpfulness to man, and that practical helpfulness to man is the expression and manifestation of devotion to God.

The three sets of injunctions in our text, dissimilar though they appear, have a common basis. They are varying forms of one fundamental disposition—love; which varies in its forms according to the necessities of its objects, bringing temporal help to the needy, meeting hostility with blessing, and rendering sympathy to both the glad and the sorrowful. There is, further, a noteworthy connection, not in sense but in sound, between the first and second clauses of our text, which is lost in our English Version. 'Given to hospitality' is, as the Revised margin shows, literally, pursuing hospitality. Now the Greek, like the English

word, has the special meaning of following with a hostile intent, and the use of it in the one sense suggests its other meaning to Paul, whose habit of ‘going off at a word,’ as it has been called, is a notable feature of his style. Hence, this second injunction, of blessing the persecutors, comes as a kind of play upon words, and is obviously occasioned by the verbal association. It would come more appropriately at a later part of the chapter, but its occurrence here is characteristic of Paul's idiosyncrasy. We may represent the connection of these two clauses by such a rendering as: Pursue hospitality, and as for those who pursue you, bless, and curse not.

We may look at these three flowers from the one root of love.

I. Love that speaks in material help.

We have here two special applications of that love which Paul regards as ‘the bond of perfectness,’ knitting all Christians together. The former of these two is love that expresses itself by tangible material aid. The persons to be helped are ‘saints,’ and it is their ‘needs’ that are to be aided. There is no trace in the Pauline Epistles of the community of goods which for a short time prevailed in the Church of Jerusalem and which was one of the causes that led to the need for the contribution for the poor saints in that city which occupied so much of Paul's attention at Corinth and elsewhere. But, whilst Christian love leaves the rights of property

intact, it charges them with the duty of supplying the needs of the brethren. They are not absolute and unconditioned rights, but are subject to the highest principles of stewardship for God, trusteeship for men, and sacrifice for Christ. These three great thoughts condition and limit the Christian man's possession of the wealth, which, in a modified sense, it is allowable for him to call his own. His brother's need constitutes a first charge on all that belongs to him, and ought to precede the gratification of his own desires for superfluities and luxuries. If we ‘see our brother have need and shut up our bowels of compassion against him’ and use our possessions for the gratification of our own whims and fancies, ‘how dwelleth the love of God in us?’ There are few things in which Christian men of this day have more need for the vigorous exercise of conscience, and for enlightenment, than in their getting, and spending, and keeping money. In that region lies the main sphere of usefulness for many of us; and if we have not been ‘faithful in that which is least,’ our unfaithfulness there makes it all but impossible that we should be faithful in that which is greatest. The honest and rigid contemplation of our own faults in the administration of our worldly goods, might well invest with a terrible meaning the Lord's tremendous question, ‘If ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?’

The hospitality which is here enjoined is

another shape which Christian love naturally took in the early days. When believers were a body of aliens, dispersed through the world, and when, as they went from one place to another, they could find homes only amongst their own brethren, the special circumstances of the time necessarily attached special importance to this duty; and as a matter of fact, we find it recognised in all the Epistles of the New Testament as one of the most imperative of Christian duties. 'It was the unity and strength which this intercourse gave that formed one of the great forces which supported Christianity.' But whilst hospitality was a special duty for the early Christians, it still remains a duty for us, and its habitual exercise would go far to break down the frowning walls which diversities of social position and of culture have reared between Christians.

II. The love that meets hostility with blessing.

There are perhaps few words in Scripture which have been more fruitful of the highest graces than this commandment. What a train of martyrs, from primitive times to the Chinese Christians in recent years, have remembered these words, and left their legacy of blessing as they laid their heads on the block or stood circled by fire at the stake! For us, in our quieter generation, actual persecution is rare, but hostility of ill-will more or less may well dog our steps, and the great principle here commended to us is that we are to meet enmity with its

opposite, and to conquer by love. The diamond is cut with sharp knives, and each stroke brings out flashing beauty. There are kinds of wood which are fragrant when they burn; and there are kinds which show their veining under the plane. It is a poor thing if a Christian character only gives back like a mirror the expression of the face that looks at it. To meet hate with hate, and scorn with scorn, is not the way to turn hate into love and scorn into sympathy. Indifferent equilibrium in the presence of active antagonism is not possible for us. As long as we are sensitive we shall wince from a blow, or a sarcasm, or a sneer. We must bless in order to keep ourselves from cursing. The lesson is very hard, and the only way of obeying it fully is to keep near Christ and drink in His spirit who prayed 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

III. Love that flows in wide sympathy.

Of the two forms of sympathy which are here enjoined, the former is the harder. To 'rejoice with them that do rejoice' makes a greater demand on unselfish love than to 'weep with them that weep.' Those who are glad feel less need of sympathy than do the sorrowful, and envy is apt to creep in and mar the completeness of sympathetic joy. But even the latter of the two injunctions is not altogether easy. The cynic has said that there is 'something not wholly displeasing in the misfortunes of our best friends'; and, though that is an utterly worldly

and unchristian remark, it must be confessed not to be altogether wanting in truth.

But for obedience to both of these injunctions, a heart at leisure from itself is needed to sympathise; and not less needed is a sedulous cultivation of the power of sympathy. No doubt temperament has much to do with the degree of our obedience; but this whole context goes on the assumption that the grace of God working on temperament strengthens natural endowments by turning them into ‘gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.’ Though we live in that awful individuality of ours, and are each, as it were, islanded in ourselves ‘with echoing straits between us thrown,’ it is possible for us, as the result of close communion with Jesus Christ, to bridge the chasms, and to enter into the joy of a brother's joy. He who groaned in Himself as He drew near to the grave of Lazarus, and was moved to weep with the weeping sisters, will help us, in the measure in which we dwell in Him and He in us, that we too may look ‘not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’

On the whole, love to Jesus is the basis of love to man, and love to man is the practical worship of Christianity. As in all things, so in the exhortations which we have now been considering, Jesus is our pattern and power. He Himself communicates with our necessities, and opens His heart to give us hospitable welcome there. He Himself has shown us how to meet and

overcome hatred with love, and hurt with blessing. He shares our griefs, and by sharing lessens them. He shares our joys, and by sharing hallows them. The summing up of all these specific injunctions is, 'Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.'

STILL ANOTHER TRIPLET

> 'Be of the same mind one toward another. Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits.'—Romans xii. 16 (R. V.).

We have here again the same triple arrangement which has prevailed through a considerable portion of the context. These three exhortations are linked together by a verbal resemblance which can scarcely be preserved in translation. In the two former the same verb is employed: and in the third the word for 'wise' is cognate with the verb found in the other two clauses. If we are to seek for any closer connection of thought we may find it first in this —that all the three clauses deal with mental attitudes, whilst the preceding ones dealt with the expression of such; and second in this—that the first of the three is a general precept, and the second and third are warnings against faults which are most likely to interfere with it.

I. We note, the bond of peace.

‘Be of the same mind one toward another.’ It is interesting to notice how frequently the Apostle in many of his letters exhorts to mutual harmonious relations. For instance, in this very Epistle he invokes ‘the God of patience and of comfort’ to grant to the Roman Christians ‘to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,’ and to the Corinthians, who had their full share of Greek divisiveness, he writes, ‘Be of the same mind, live in peace,’ and assures them that, if so, ‘the God of love and peace will be with them’; to his beloved Philippians he pours out his heart in beseeching them by ‘the consolation that is in Christ Jesus, and the comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit —’ that they would ‘fulfil his joy, that they be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind’; whilst to the two women in that Church who were at variance with one another he sends the earnest exhortation ‘to be of the same mind in the Lord,’ and prays one whom we only know by his loving designation of ‘a true yokefellow,’ to help them in what would apparently put a strain upon their Christian principle. For communities and for individuals the cherishing of the spirit of amity and concord is a condition without which there will be little progress in the Christian life.

But it is to be carefully noted that such a spirit may co-exist with great differences about other matters. It is not opposed to wide divergence of

opinion, though in our imperfect sanctification it is hard for us to differ and yet to be in concord. We all know the hopelessness of attempting to make half a dozen good men think alike on any of the greater themes of the Christian religion; and if we could succeed in such a vain attempt, there would still be many an unguarded door through which could come the spirit of discord, and the half-dozen might have divergence of heart even whilst they profess identity of opinion. The true hindrances to our having ‘the same mind one toward another’ lie very much deeper in our nature than the region in which we keep our creeds. The self-regard and self-absorption, petulant dislike of fellow-Christians' peculiarities, the indifference which comes from lack of imaginative sympathy, and which ministers to the ignorance which causes it, and a thousand other weaknesses in Christian character bring about the deplorable alienation which but too plainly marks the relation of Christian communities and of individual Christians to one another in this day. When one thinks of the actual facts in every corner of Christendom, and probes one's own feelings, the contrast between the apostolic ideal and the Church's realisation of it presents a contradiction so glaring that one wonders if Christian people at all believe that it is their duty ‘to be of the same mind one toward another.’

The attainment of this spirit of amity and concord ought to be a distinct object of effort, and especially in times like ours, when there is

no hostile pressure driving Christian people together, but when our great social differences are free to produce a certain inevitable divergence and to check the flow of our sympathy, and when there are deep clefts of opinion, growing deeper every day, and seeming to part off Christians into camps which have little understanding of, and less sympathy with, one another. Even the strong individualism, which it is the glory of true Christian faith to foster in character, and which some forms of Christian fellowship do distinctly promote, works harm in this matter; and those who pride themselves on belonging to 'Free churches,' and standing apart from creed-bound and clergy-led communities, are specially called upon to see to it that they keep this exhortation, and cultivate 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

It should not be necessary to insist that the closest mutual concord amongst all believers is but an imperfect manifestation, as all manifestations in life of the deepest principles must be, of the true oneness which binds together in the most sacred unity, and should bind together in closest friendship, all partakers of the one life. And assuredly the more that one life flows into our spirits, the less power will all the enemies of Christian concord have over us. It is the Christ in us which makes us kindred with all others in whom He is. It is self, in some form or other, that separates us from the possessors of like precious faith. When the tide is out, the little rock-pools on the shore lie separated by

stretches of slimy weeds, but the great sea, when it rushes up, buries the divisions, and unites them all. Our Christian unity is unity in Christ, and the only sure way ‘to be of the same mind one toward another’ is, that ‘the mind which was in Christ Jesus be in us also.’

II. The divisive power of selfish ambition.

‘Set not your mind on high things, but condescend to things that are lowly.’ The contrast here drawn between the high and the lowly makes it probable that the latter as well as the former is to be taken as referring to ‘things’ rather than persons. The margin of the Revised Version gives the literal rendering of the word translated ‘condescend.’ ‘To be carried away with,’ is metaphorically equivalent to surrendering one's self to; and the two clauses present two sides of one disposition, which seeks not for personal advancement or conspicuous work which may minister to self-gratulation, but contentedly fills the lowly sphere, and ‘the humblest duties on herself doth lay.’ We need not pause to point out that such an ideal is dead against the fashionable maxims of this generation. Personal ambition is glorified as an element in progress, and to a world which believes in such a proverb as ‘devil take the hindmost,’ these two exhortations can only seem fanatical absurdity. And yet, perhaps, if we fairly take into account how the seeking after personal advancement and conspicuous work festers the soul, and how the flower of heart's-ease grows,

as Bunyan's shepherd-boy found out, in the lowly valley, these exhortations to a quiet performance of lowly duties and a contented filling of lowly spheres, may seem touched with a higher wisdom than is to be found in the arenas where men trample over each other in their pursuit of a fame ‘which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.’ What a peaceful world it would be, and what peaceful souls they would have, if Christian people really adopted as their own these two simple maxims. They are easy to understand, but how hard they are to follow.

It needs scarcely be noted that the temper condemned here destroys all the concord and amity which the Apostle has been urging in the previous clause. Where every man is eagerly seeking to force himself in front of his neighbour, any community will become a struggling mob; and they who are trying to outrun one another and who grasp at ‘high things,’ will never be ‘of the same mind one toward another.’ But, we may observe that the surest way to keep in check the natural selfish tendency to desire conspicuous things for ourselves is honestly, and with rigid self-control, to let ourselves be carried away by enthusiasm for humble tasks. If we would not disturb our lives and fret our hearts by ambitions that, even when gratified, bring no satisfaction, we must yield ourselves to the impulse of the continuous stream of lowly duties which runs through every life.

But, plainly as this exhortation is needful, it is too heavy a strain to be ever carried out except by the power of Christ formed in the heart. It is in His earthly life that we find the great example of the highest stooping to the lowest duties, and elevating them by taking them upon Himself. He did not ‘strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets.’ Thirty years of that perfect life were spent in a little village folded away in the Galilean hills, with rude peasants for the only spectators, and the narrow sphere of a carpenter's shop for its theatre. For the rest, the publicity possible would have been obscurity to an ambitious soul. To speak comforting words to a few weeping hearts; to lay His hands on a few sick folk and heal them; to go about in a despised land doing good, loved indeed by outcasts and sinners, unknown by all the dispensers of renown, and consciously despised by all whom the world honoured—that was the perfect life of the Incarnate God. And that is an example which His followers seem with one consent to set aside in their eager race after distinction and work that may glorify their names. The difficulty of a faithful following of these precepts, and the only means by which that difficulty can be overcome, are touchingly taught us in another of Paul's Epistles by the accumulation of motives which he brings to bear upon his commandment, when he exhorts by the tender motives of ‘comfort in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and tender mercies and compassions, that ye fulfil my joy,

being of the same mind, of one accord; doing nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself.' As the pattern for each of us in our narrow sphere, he holds forth the mind that was in Christ Jesus, and the great self-emptying which he shrank not from, 'but being in the form of God counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death.'

III. The divisive power of intellectual self-conceit.

In this final clause the Apostle, in some sense, repeats the maxim with which he began the series of special exhortations in this chapter. He there enjoined 'every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think'; here he deals with one especial form of such too lofty thinking, viz. intellectual conceit. He is possibly quoting the Book of Proverbs (iii. 7), where we read, 'Be not wise in thine own eyes,' which is preceded by, 'Lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge Him'; and is followed by, 'Fear the Lord and depart from evil'; thus pointing to the acknowledgment and fear of the Lord as the great antagonist of such over-estimate of one's own wisdom as of all other faults of mind and life. It needs not to point out how such a disposition breaks Christian unity of spirit. There is something especially isolating in that form of

self-conceit. There are few greater curses in the Church than little coteries of superior persons who cannot feed on ordinary food, whose enlightened intelligence makes them too fastidious to soil their dainty fingers with rough, vulgar work, and whose supercilious criticism of the unenlightened souls that are content to condescend to lowly Christian duties, is like an iceberg that brings down the temperature wherever it floats. That temper indulged in, breaks the unity, reduces to inactivity the work, and puts an end to the progress, of any Christian community in which it is found; and just as its predominance is harmful, so the obedience to the exhortation against it is inseparable from the fulfilling of its sister precepts. To know ourselves for the foolish creatures that we are, is a mighty help to being 'of the same mind one toward another.' Who thinks of himself soberly and according to the measure of faith which God hath dealt to him will not hunger after high things, but rather prefer the lowly ones that are on a level with his lowly self.

The exhortations of our text were preceded with injunctions to distribute material help, and to bestow helpful sympathy. The tempers enjoined in our present text are the inward source and fountain of such external bestowments. The rendering of material help and of sympathetic emotion are right and valuable only as they are the outcome of this unanimity and lowliness. It is possible to 'distribute to the necessity of saints' in such a

way as that the gift pains more than a blow; it is possible to proffer sympathy so that the sensitive heart shrinks from it. It was ‘when the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul’ that it became natural to have all things common. As in the aurora borealis, quivering beams from different centres stream out and at each throb approach each other till they touch and make an arch of light that glorifies the winter's night, so, if Christian men were ‘of the same mind toward one another,’ did not ‘set their minds on high things, but condescended to things that were lowly, and were not wise in their own conceits,’ the Church of Christ would shine forth in the darkness of a selfish world and would witness to Him who came down ‘from the highest throne in glory’ to the lowliest place in this lowly world, that He might lift us to His own height of glory everlasting.

STILL ANOTHER TRIPLET

> ‘Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honourable in the light of all men. 18. If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men.’—ROMANS xii. 17, 18 (R. V.).

The closing words of this chapter have a certain unity in that they deal principally with a Christian's duty in the face of hostility and

antagonism. A previous injunction touched on the same subject in the exhortation to bless the persecutors; but with that exception, all the preceding verses have dealt with duties owing to those with whom we stand in friendly relations. Such exhortations take no cognisance of the special circumstances of the primitive Christians as 'lambs in the midst of wolves'; and a large tract of Christian duty would be undealt with, if we had not such directions for feelings and actions in the face of hate and hurt. The general precept in our text is expanded in a more complete form in the verses which follow the text, and we may postpone its consideration until we have to deal with them. It is one form of the application of the 'love without hypocrisy' which has been previously recommended. The second of these three precepts seems quite heterogeneous, but it may be noticed that the word for 'evil' in the former and that for 'honourable,' in these closely resemble each other in sound, and the connection of the two clauses may be partially owing to that verbal resemblance; whilst we may also discern a real link between the thoughts in the consideration that we owe even to our enemies the exhibition of a life which a prejudiced hostility will be forced to recognise as good. The third of these exhortations prescribes unmoved persistence in friendly regard to all men.

Dealing then, in this sermon only, with the second and third of these precepts, and postponing the consideration of the first to the

following discourse, we have here the counsel that

I. Hostility is to be met with a holy and beautiful life.

The Authorised Version inadequately translates the significant word in this exhortation by ‘honest.’ The Apostle is not simply enjoining honesty in our modern, narrow sense of the word, which limits it to the rendering to every man his own. It is a remarkable thing that ‘honest,’ like many other words expressing various types of goodness, has steadily narrowed in signification, and it is very characteristic of England that probity as to money and material goods should be its main meaning. Here the word is used in the full breadth of its ancient use, and is equivalent to that which is fair with the moral beauty of goodness.

A Christian man then is bound to live a life which all men will acknowledge to be good. In that precept is implied the recognition of even bad men's notions of morality as correct. The Gospel is not a new system of ethics, though in some points it brings old virtues into new prominence, and alters their perspective. It is further implied that the world's standard of what Christians ought to be may be roughly taken as a true one. Christian men would learn a great deal about themselves, and might in many respects heighten their ideal, if they would try to satisfy

the expectations of the most degraded among them as to what they ought to be. The worst of men has a rude sense of duty which tops the attainments of the best. Christian people ought to seek for the good opinion of those around them. They are not to take that opinion as the motive for their conduct, nor should they do good in order to be praised or admired for it; but they are to 'adorn the doctrine,' and to let their light shine that men seeing their good may be led to think more loftily of its source, and so to 'glorify their Father which is in heaven.' That is one way of preaching the Gospel. The world knows goodness when it sees it, though it often hates it, and has no better ground for its dislike of a man than that his purity and beauty of character make the lives of others seem base indeed. Bats feel the light to be light, though they flap against it, and the winnowing of their leathery wings and their blundering flight are witnesses to that against which they strike. Jesus had to say, 'The world hateth Me because I testify of it that the deeds thereof are evil.' That witness was the result of His being 'the Light of the world'; and if His followers are illuminated from Him, they will have the same effect, and must be prepared for the same response. But none the less is it incumbent upon them to 'take thought for things honourable in the sight of all men.'

This duty involves the others of taking care that we have goodness to show, and that we do not make our goodness repulsive by our

additions to it. There are good people who comfort themselves when men dislike them, or scoff at them, by thinking that their religion is the cause, when it is only their own roughness and harshness of character. It is not enough that we present an austere and repellent virtue; the fair food should be set on a fair platter. This duty is especially owing to our enemies. They are our keenest critics. They watch for our halting. The thought of their hostile scrutiny should ever stimulate us, and the consciousness that Argus-eyes are watching us, with a keenness sharpened by dislike, should lead us not only to vigilance over our own steps, but also to the prayer, 'Lead me in a plain path, because of those who watch me.' To 'provide things honest in the sight of all men' is a possible way of disarming some hostility, conciliating some prejudice, and commending to some hearts the Lord whom we seek to imitate.

II. Be sure that, if there is to be enmity, it is all on one side.

'As much as in you lieth, be at peace with all.' These words are, I think, unduly limited when they are supposed to imply that there are circumstances in which a Christian has a right to be at strife. As if they meant: Be peaceable as far as you can; but if it be impossible, then quarrel. The real meaning goes far deeper than that. 'It takes two to make a quarrel,' says the old proverb; it takes two to make peace also, does it not? We cannot determine whether our relations

with men will be peaceful or no; we are only answerable for our part, and for that we are answerable. ‘As much as lieth in you’ is the explanation of ‘if it be possible.’ Your part is to be at peace; it is not your part up to a certain point and no further, but always, and in all circumstances, it is your part. It may not be possible to be at peace with all men; there may be some who *will* quarrel with you. You are not to blame for that, but their part and yours are separate, and your part is the same whatever they do. Be you at peace with all men whether they are at peace with you or not. Don't you quarrel with them even if they will quarrel with you. That seems to me to be plainly the meaning of the words. It would be contrary to the tenor of the context and the teaching of the New Testament to suppose that here we had that favourite principle, ‘There is a point beyond which forbearance cannot go,’ where it becomes right to cherish hostile sentiments or to try to injure a man. If there be such a point, it is very remarkable that there is no attempt made in the New Testament to define it. The nearest approach to such definition is ‘till seventy times seven,’ the two perfect numbers multiplied into themselves. So I think that this injunction absolutely prescribes persistent, patient peacefulness, and absolutely proscribes our taking up the position of antagonism, and under no circumstances meeting hate with hate. It does not follow that there is never to be opposition. It may be necessary for the good of the opponent

himself, and for the good of society, that he should be hindered in his actions of hostility, but there is never to be bitterness; and we must take care that none of the devil's leaven mingles with our zeal against evil.

There is no need for enlarging on the enormous difficulty of carrying out such a commandment in our daily lives. We all know too well how hard it is; but we may reflect for a moment on the absolute necessity of obeying this precept to the full. For their own souls' sakes Christian men are to avoid all bitterness, strife, and malice. Let us try to remember, and to bring to bear on our daily lives, the solemn things which Jesus said about God's forgiveness being measured by our forgiveness. The faithful, even though imperfect, following of this exhortation would revolutionise our lives. Nothing that we can only win by fighting with our fellows is worth fighting for. Men will weary of antagonism which is met only by the imperturbable calm of a heart at peace with God, and seeking peace with all men. The hot fire of hatred dies down, like burning coals scattered on a glacier, when laid against the crystal coldness of a patient, peaceful spirit. Watch-dogs in farmhouses will bark half the night through because they hear another barking a mile off. It takes two to make a quarrel; let me be sure that I am never one of the two!

STILL ANOTHER TRIPLET

> 'Dearly beloved, avenge not
> yourselves, but rather give place
> unto wrath: for it is written,
> Vengeance is mine; I will repay,
> saith the Lord. 20. Therefore if thine
> enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst,
> give him drink; for in so doing thou
> shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
> 21. Be not overcome of evil, but
> overcome evil with good.'—
> ROMANS xii. 19-21.

The natural instinct is to answer enmity with enmity, and kindliness with kindliness. There are many people of whom we think well and like, for no other reason than because we believe that they think well of and like us. Such a love is really selfishness. In the same fashion, dislike, and alienation on the part of another naturally reproduce themselves in our own minds. A dog will stretch its neck to be patted, and snap at a stick raised to strike it. It requires a strong effort to master this instinctive tendency, and that effort the plainest principles of Christian morality require from us all. The precepts in our text are in twofold form, negative and positive; and they are closed with a general principle, which includes both these forms, and much more besides. There are two pillars, and a great lintel coping them, like the trilithons of Stonehenge.

I. We deal with the negative precept.

‘Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath.’ Do not take the law into your own hands, but leave God's way of retribution to work itself out. By avenging, the Apostle means a passionate redress of private wrongs at the bidding of personal resentment. We must note how deep this precept goes. It prohibits not merely external acts which, in civilised times are restrained by law, but, as with Christian morality, it deals with thoughts and feelings, and not only with deeds. It forbids such natural and common thoughts as ‘I owe him an ill turn for that’; ‘I should like to pay him off.’ A great deal of what is popularly called ‘a proper spirit’ becomes extremely improper if tested by this precept. There is an eloquent word in German which we can only clumsily reproduce, which christens the ugly pleasure at seeing misfortune and calls it ‘joy in others’ disasters.’ We have not the word; would that we had not the thing!

A solemn reason is added for the difficult precept, in that frequently misunderstood saying, ‘Give place unto wrath.’ The question is, Whose wrath? And, plainly, the subsequent words of the section show that it is God's. That quotation comes from Deuteronomy xxxii. 35. It is possibly unfortunate that ‘vengeance’ is ascribed to God; for hasty readers lay hold of the idea of passionate resentment, and transfer it to Him, whereas His retributive action has in it no resentment and no passion. Nor are we to

suppose that the thought here is only the base one, *they are sure to be punished, so we need not trouble*. The Apostle points to the solemn fact of retribution as an element in the Divine government. It is not merely automatically working laws which recompense evil by evil, but it is the face of the Lord which is inexorably and inevitably set 'against them that do evil.' That recompense is not hidden away in the future behind the curtain of death, but is realised in the present, as every evil-doer too surely and bitterly experiences.

'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' God only has the right to recompense the ungodly and the sinner as well as the righteous. Dwelling in such a system as we do, how dares any one take that work into his hands? It requires perfect knowledge of the true evil of an action, which no one has who cannot read the heart; it requires perfect freedom from passion; it requires perfect immunity from evil desert on the part of the avenger; in a word, it belongs to God, and to Him alone. We have nothing to do with apportioning retribution to desert, either in private actions or in the treatment of so-called criminals. In the latter our objects should be reformation and the safety of society. If we add to these retribution, we transcend our functions.

II. Take the positive,—Follow God's way of meeting hostility with beneficence.

The hungry enemy is to be fed, the thirsty to

be given drink; and the reason is, that such beneficence will ‘heap coals of fire upon his head.’ The negative is not enough. To abstain from vengeance will leave the heart unaffected, and may simply issue in the cessation of all intercourse. The reason assigned sounds at first strange. It is clear that the ‘coals of fire’ which are to be heaped on the head are meant to melt and soften the heart, and cause it to glow with love. There may be also included the burning pangs of shame felt by a man whose evil is answered by good. But these are secondary and auxiliary to the true end of kindling the fire of love in his alienated heart. The great object which every Christian man is bound to have in view is to win over the enemy and melt away misconceptions and hostility. It is not from any selfish regard to one's own personal ease that we are so to act, but because of the sacred regard which Christ has taught us to cherish for the blessing of peace amongst men, and in order that we may deliver a brother from the snare, and make him share in the joys of fellowship with God. The only way to burn up the evil in his heart is by heaping coals of kindness and beneficence on his head. And for such an end it becomes us to watch for opportunities. We have to mark the right moment, and make sure that we time our offer for food when he is hungry and of drink when he thirsts; for often *mal-a-propos* offers of kindness make things worse. Such is God's way. His thunderbolts we cannot grasp, His love we can copy. Of the two weapons

mercy and judgment which He holds in His hand, the latter is emphatically His own; the former should be ours too.

III. In all life meet and conquer evil with good.

This last precept, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,' is cast into a form which covers not only relations to enemies, but all contact with evil of every kind. It involves many great thoughts which can here be only touched. It implies that in all our lives we have to fight evil, and that it conquers, and we are beaten when we are led to do it. It is only conquered by being transformed into good. We overcome our foes when we win them to be lovers. We overcome our temptations to doing wrong when we make them occasions for developing virtues; we overcome the evil of sorrow when we use it to bring us nearer to God; we overcome the men around us when we are not seduced by their example to evil, but attract them to goodness by ours.

Evil is only thus transformed by the positive exercise of goodness on our part. We have seen this in regard to enemies in the preceding remarks. In regard to other forms of evil, it is often better not to fight them directly, but to occupy the mind and heart with positive truth and goodness, and the will and hands with active service. A rusty knife shall not be cleaned so effectually by much scouring as by strenuous use. Our lives are to be moulded after the great

example of Him, who at almost the last moment of His earthly course said, 'Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.' Jesus seeks to conquer evil in us all, and counts that He has conquered it when He has changed it into love.

LOVE AND THE DAY

'Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. 11. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. 12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light, 13. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and

> envying: 14. But put ye on the Lord
> Jesus Christ, and make not provision
> for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts
> thereof.'—ROMANS xiii. 8-14.

The two paragraphs of this passage are but slightly connected. The first inculcates the obligation of universal love; and the second begins by suggesting, as a motive for the discharge of that duty, the near approach of 'the day.' The light of that dawn draws Paul's eyes and leads him to wider exhortations on Christian purity as befitting the children of light.

I. Verses 8-10 set forth the obligation of a love which embraces all men, and comprehends all duties to them. The Apostle has just been laying down the general exhortation, 'Pay every man his due' and applying it especially to the Christian's relation to civic rulers. He repeats it in a negative form, and bases on it the obligation of loving every man. That love is further represented as the sum and substance of the law. Thus Paul brings together two thoughts which are often dealt with as mutually exclusive,—namely, love and law. He does not talk sentimentalisms about the beauty of charity and the like, but lays it down, as a 'hard and fast rule,' that we are bound to love every man with whom we come in contact; or, as the Greek has it, 'the other.'

That is the first plain truth taught here. Love is not an emotion which we may indulge or not,

as we please. It is not to select its objects according to our estimate of their lovableness or goodness. But we are bound to love, and that all round, without distinction of beautiful or ugly, good or bad. ‘A hard saying; who can hear it?’ Every man is our creditor for that debt. He does not get his due from us unless he gets love. Note, further, that the debt of love is never discharged. After all payments it still remains owing. There is no paying in full of all demands, and, as Bengel says, it is an undying debt. We are apt to weary of expending love, especially on unworthy recipients, and to think that we have wiped off all claims, and it may often be true that our obligations to others compel us to cease helping one; but if we laid Paul's words to heart, our patience would be longer-breathed, and we should not be so soon ready to shut hearts and purses against even unthankful suitors.

Further, Paul here teaches us that this debt (*debitum*, ‘duty’) of love includes all duties. It is the fulfilling of the law, inasmuch as it will secure the conduct which the law prescribes. The Mosaic law itself indicates this, since it recapitulates the various commandments of the second table, in the one precept of love to our neighbour (Lev. xix. 18). Law enjoins but has no power to get its injunctions executed. Love enables and inclines to do all that law prescribes, and to avoid all that it prohibits. The multiplicity of duties is melted into unity; and that unity, when it comes into act, unfolds into whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.

Love is the mother tincture which, variously diluted and manipulated, yields all potent and fragrant draughts. It is the white light which the prism of daily life resolves into its component colours.

But Paul seems to limit the action of love here to negative doing no ill. That is simply because the commandments are mostly negative, and that they are is a sad token of the lovelessness natural to us all. But do we love ourselves only negatively, or are we satisfied with doing ourselves no harm? That stringent pattern of love to others not only prescribes degree, but manner. It teaches that true love to men is not weak indulgence, but must sometimes chastise, and thwart, and always must seek their good, and not merely their gratification.

Whoever will honestly seek to apply that negative precept of working no ill to others, will find it positive enough. We harm men when we fail to help them. If we can do them a kindness, and do it not, we do them ill. Non-activity for good is activity for evil. Surely, nothing can be plainer than the bearing of this teaching on the Christian duty as to intoxicants. If by using these a Christian puts a stumbling-block in the way of a weak will, then he is working ill to his neighbour, and that argues absence of love, and that is dishonest, shirking payment of a plain debt.

II. The great stimulus to love and to all purity

is set forth as being the near approach—of the day (verses 11-14). ‘The day,’ in Paul's writing, has usually the sense of the great day of the Lord's return, and may have that meaning here; for, as Jesus has told us, ‘it is not for’ even inspired Apostles ‘to know the times or the seasons,’ and it is no dishonour to apostolic inspiration to assign to it the limits which the Lord has assigned.

But, whether we take this as the meaning of the phrase, or regard it simply as pointing to the time of death as the dawning of heaven's day, the weight of the motive is unaffected. The language is vividly picturesque. The darkness is thinning, and the blackness turning grey. Light begins to stir and whisper. A band of soldiers lies asleep, and, as the twilight begins to dawn, the bugle call summons them to awake, to throw off their night-gear,—namely, the works congenial to darkness,—and to brace on their armour of light. Light may here be regarded as the material of which the glistering armour is made; but, more probably, the expression means weapons appropriate to the light.

Such being the general picture, we note the fact which underlies the whole representation; namely, that every life is a definite whole which has a fixed end. Jesus said, ‘We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh.’ Paul uses the opposite metaphors in these verses. But, though the two sayings are opposite in form, they are identical in substance.

In both, the predominant thought is that of the rapidly diminishing space of earthly life, and the complete unlikeness to it of the future. We stand like men on a sandbank with an incoming tide, and every wash of the waves eats away its edges, and presently it will yield below our feet. We forget this for the most part, and perhaps it is not well that it should be ever present; but that it should never be present is madness and sore loss.

Paul, in his intense moral earnestness, in verse 13, bids us regard ourselves as already in 'the day,' and shape our conduct as if it shone around us and all things were made manifest by its light. The sins to be put off are very gross and palpable. They are for the most part sins of flesh, such as even these Roman Christians had to be warned against, and such as need to be manifested by the light even now among many professing Christian communities.

But Paul has one more word to say. If he stopped without it, he would have said little to help men who are crying out, 'How am I to strip off this clinging evil, which seems my skin rather than my clothing? How am I to put on that flashing panoply?' There is but one way,—put on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we commit ourselves to Him by faith, and front our temptations in His strength, and thus, as it were, wrap ourselves in Him, He will be to us dress and armour, strength and righteousness. Our old self will fall away, and we shall take no

forethought for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

SALVATION NEARER

> '... Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.'—ROMANS xiii. 11.

There is no doubt, I suppose, that the Apostle, in common with the whole of the early Church, entertained more or less consistently the expectation of living to witness the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are in Paul's letters passages which look both in the direction of that anticipation, and in the other one of expecting to taste death. 'We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,' he says twice in one chapter. 'I am ready to be offered, and the hour of my departure is at hand,' he says in his last letter.

Now this contrariety of anticipation is but the natural result of what our Lord Himself said, 'It is not for you to know the times and the seasons,' and no one, who is content to form his doctrine of the knowledge resulting from inspiration from the words of Jesus Christ Himself, need stumble in the least degree in recognising the plain fact that Paul and his brother Apostles did not know when the Master was to come. Christ Himself had told them that

there was a chamber locked against their entrance, and therefore we do not need to think that it militates against the authoritative inspiration of these early teachers of the Church, if they, too, searched 'what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand ... the glory that should follow.'

Now, my text is evidently the result of the former of these two anticipations, viz. that Paul and his generation were probably to see the coming of the Lord from heaven. And to him the thought that' the night was far spent,' as the context says, 'and the day was at hand,' underlay his most buoyant hope, and was the inspiration and motive-spring of his most strenuous effort.

Now, our relation to the closing moments of our own earthly lives, to the fact of death, is precisely the same as that of the Apostle and his brethren to the coming of the Lord. We, too, stand in that position of partial ignorance, and for us practically the words of my text, and all their parallel words, point to how we should think of, and how we should be affected by, the end to which we are coming. And this is the grand characteristic of the Christian view of that last solemn moment. 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' So I would note, first of all, what these words teach us should be the Christian view of our own end; and, second, to what conduct that view should lead us.

I. The Christian view of death.

‘Now is our salvation nearer.’ We have to think away by faith and hope all the grim externals of death, and to get to the heart of the thing. And then everything that is repulsive, everything that makes flesh and blood shrink, disappears and is evaporated, and beneath the folds of his black garment, there is revealed God's last, sweetest, most triumphant angel-messenger to Christian souls, the great, strong, silent Angel of Death, and he carries in his hand the gift of a full salvation. That is what our Apostle rose to the rapture of beholding, when he knew that the thought of his surviving till Christ came again must be put away, and when close to the last moment of his life, he said, ‘The Lord shall deliver me, and save me into His everlasting kingdom.’ What was the deliverance and being saved that he expected and expresses in these words? Immunity from punishment? Escape from the headsman's axe? Being ‘delivered from the mouth of the lion,’ the persecuting fangs of the bloody Nero? By no means. He knew that death was at hand, and he said, ‘He will save me’—not from it, but through it—‘into His everlasting kingdom.’ And so in the words of my text we may say—though Paul did not mean them so—as we see the distance between us, and that certain close, dwindling, dwindling, dwindling: ‘Now,’ as moment after moment ticks itself into the past, ‘now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.’ Children, when they are getting near their

holidays, take strips of paper, and tear off a piece as each day passes. And as we tear off the days let us feel that we are drawing closer to our home, and that the blessedness laid up for us in it is drawing nearer to us. 'Our salvation,' not our destruction, our fuller life, not in any true sense of the word our 'death,' is 'nearer than when we believed.'

But some one may say, 'Is a man not saved till after he is dead?' Is salvation future, not coming till after the grave? No, certainly not. There are three aspects of that word in Scripture. Sometimes the New Testament writers treat salvation as past, and represent a Christian as being invested with the possession of it all at the very moment of his first faith. That is true, that whatever is yet to be evolved from what is given to the poorest and foulest sinner, in the moment of his initial faith in Christ, there is nothing to be added to it. The salvation which the penitent thief received on the cross is all the salvation that he was ever to get. But out of it there came welling and welling and welling, when he had passed into the region 'where beyond these voices there is peace'—there came welling out from that inexhaustible fountain which was opened in him all the fullnesses of an eternal progress in the heavens. And so it is with us. Salvation is a past gift which we received when we believed.

But in another aspect, which is also emphatically stated in Scripture, it is a

progressive process, and not merely a gift bestowed once for all in the past. I do not dwell upon that thought, but just remind you of a turn of expression which occurs in various connections more than once. 'The Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved,' says Luke. Still more emphatically in the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle puts into antithesis the two progressive processes, and speaks of the Gospel as being preached, and being a savour of life unto life 'to them that are being saved,' and a savour of destruction 'to them that are being lost.' No moral or spiritual condition is stereotyped or stagnant. It is all progressive. And so the salvation that is given once for all is ever being unfolded, and the Christian life on earth is the unfolding of it.

But in another aspect still, such as is presented in my text, and in other parallel passages, that salvation is regarded as lying on the other side of the flood, because the manifestations of it there, the evolving there of what is in it, and the great gifts that come then, are so transcendently above all even of our selectest experiences here, that they are, as it were, new, though still their roots are in the old. The salvation which culminates in the absolute removal from our whole being of all manner of evil, whether it be sorrow or sin, and in the conclusive bestowal upon us of all manner of good, whether it be righteousness or joy, and which has for its seal 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body,' so that body, soul, and spirit 'make one

music as before, but vaster,' is so far beyond the germs of itself which here we experience that my text and its like are amply vindicated. And the man who is most fully persuaded and conscious that he possesses the salvation of God, and most fully and blessedly aware that that salvation is gradually gaining power in his life, is the very man who will most feel that between its highest manifestation on earth, and its lowest in the heavens there is such a gulf as that the wine that he will drink there at the Father's table is indeed new wine. And so 'is our salvation nearer,' though we already possess it, 'than when we believed.'

Dear brethren, if these things be true, and if to die is to be saved into the kingdom, do not two thoughts result? The one is that that blessed consummation should occupy more of our thoughts than I am afraid it does. As life goes on, and the space dwindles between us and it, we older people naturally fall into the way, unless we are fools, of more seriously and frequently turning our thoughts to the end. I suppose the last week of a voyage to Australia has far more thoughts in it about the landing next week than the two or three first days of beating down the English Channel had. I do not want to put old heads on young shoulders in this or in any other respect. But sure I am that it does belong very intimately to the strength of our Christian characters that we should, as the Psalmist says, be 'wise' to 'consider our latter end.'

The other thought that follows is as plain, viz. that that anticipation should always be buoyant, hopeful, joyous. We have nothing to do with the sad aspects of parting from earth. They are all but non-existent for the Christian consciousness, when it is as vigorous and God-directed as it ought to be. They drop into the background, and sometimes are lost to sight altogether. Remember how this Apostle, when he does think about death, looks at it with—I was going to quote words which may strike you as being inappropriate—'a frolic welcome'; how, at all events, he is neither a bit afraid of it, nor does he see in it anything from which to shrink. He speaks of being with Christ, which is far better; 'absent from the body, present with the Lord'; 'the dissolution of the earthly house of this tabernacle'—the tumbling down of the old clay cottage in order that a stately palace of marble and precious stones may be reared upon its site; 'the hour of my departure is at hand; I have finished the fight.' Peter, too, chimes in with his words: 'My exodus; my departure,' and both of the two are looking, if not longingly, at all events without a tremor of the eyelid, into the very eyeballs of the messenger whom most men feel so hideous. Is it not a wonderful gift to Christian souls that by faith in Jesus Christ, the realm in which their hope can expatiate is more than doubled, and annexes the dim lands beyond the frontier of death? Dear friends, if we are living in Christ, the thought of the end and that here we are absent from home, ought to be

infinitely sweet, of whatever superficial terrors this poor, shrinking flesh may still be conscious. And I am sure that the nearer we get to our Saviour, and the more we realise the joyous possession of salvation as already ours, and the more we are conscious of the expanding of that gift in our hearts, the more we shall be delivered from that fear of death which makes men all their 'lifetime subject to bondage.' So I beseech you to aim at this, that, when you look forward, the furthest thing you see on the horizon of earth may be that great Angel of Death coming to save you into the everlasting kingdom.

Now, just a word about

II. The conduct to which such a hope should incite.

The Apostle puts it very plainly in the context, and we need but expand in a word or two what he teaches us there. 'And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' To what does he refer by 'that'? The whole of the practical exhortations to a Christian life which have been given before. Everything that is duty becomes tenfold more stringent and imperative when we apprehend the true meaning of that last moment. They tell us that it is unwholesome to be thinking about death and the beyond, because to do so takes away interest from much of our present occupations and weakens energy. If there is anything from which

a man is wrenched away because he steadily contemplates the fact of being wrenched away altogether from everything before long, it is something that he had better be wrenched from. And if there be any occupations which dwindle into nothingness, and into which a man cannot for the life of him fling himself with any thoroughgoing enthusiasm or interest, if once the thought of death stirs in him, depend upon it they are occupations which are in themselves contemptible and unworthy. All good aims will gain greater power over us; we shall have a saner estimate of what is worth living for; we shall have a new standard of what is the relative importance of things; and if some that looked very great turn out to be very small when we let that searching light in upon them, and others which seemed very insignificant spring suddenly up into dominating magnitude—that new and truer perspective will be all clear gain. The more we feel that our salvation is sweeping towards us, as it were, from the throne of God through the blue abysses, the more diligently we shall 'work while it is called day,' and the more earnestly we shall seek, when the Saviour and His salvation come, to be found with loins girt for all strenuous work, and lamps burning in all the brightness of the light of a Christian character.

Further, says Paul, this hopeful, cheerful contemplation of approaching salvation should lead us to cast off the evil, and to put on the good. You will remember the heart-stirring

imagery which the Apostle employs in the context, where he says, ‘The day is at hand; let us therefore fling off the works of darkness’—as men in the morning, when the daylight comes through the window, and makes them lift their eyelids, fling off their night-gear—‘and let us put on the armour of light.’ We are soldiers, and must be clad in what will be bullet-proof, and will turn a sword's edge. And where shall steel of celestial temper be found that can resist the fiery darts shot at the Christian soldier? His armour must be ‘of light.’ Clad in the radiance of Christian character he will be invulnerable. And how can we, who have robed ourselves in the works of darkness, either cast them off or array ourselves in sparkling armour of light? Paul tells us, ‘Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh.’ The picture is of a camp of sleeping soldiers; the night wears thin, the streaks of saffron are coming in the dawning east. One after another the sleepers awake; they cast aside their night-gear, and they brace on the armour that sparkles in the beams of the morning sun. So they are ready when the trumpet sounds the reveille, and with the morning comes the Captain of the Lord's host, and with the Captain comes the perfecting of the salvation which is drawing nearer and nearer to us, as our moments glide through our fingers like the beads of a rosary. Many men think of death and fear; the Christian should think of death—and hope.

THE SOLDIER'S MORNING-CALL

> ‘Let us put on the armour of light.’—
> ROMANS xiii. 12.

It is interesting to notice that the metaphor of the Christian armour occurs in Paul's letters throughout his whole course. It first appears, in a very rudimentary form, in the earliest of the Epistles, that to the Thessalonians. It appears here in a letter which belongs to the middle of his career, and it appears finally in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in its fully developed and drawn-out shape, at almost the end of his work. So we may fairly suppose that it was one of his familiar thoughts. Here it has a very picturesque addition, for the picture that is floating before his vivid imagination is that of a company of soldiers, roused by the morning bugle, casting off their night-gear because the day is beginning to dawn, and bracing on the armour that sparkles in the light of the rising sun. ‘That,’ says Paul, ‘is what you Christian people ought to be. Can you not hear the notes of the reveille? The night is far spent; the day is at hand; therefore let us put off the works of darkness—the night-gear that was fit for those hours of slumber. Toss it away, and put on the armour that belongs to the day.’

Now, I am not going to ask or try to answer the question of how far this Apostolic exhortation is based upon the Apostle's expectation that the world was drawing near its

end. That does not matter at all for us at present, for the fact which he expresses as the foundation of this exhortation is true about us all, and about our position in the midst of these fleeting shadows round us. We are hastening to the dawning of the true day. And so let me try to emphasise the exhortation here, old and threadbare and commonplace as it is, because we all need it, at whatever point of life's journey we have arrived.

Now, the first thing that strikes me is that the garb for the man expectant of the day is armour.

We might have anticipated something very different in accordance with the thoughts that Paul's imagery here suggests, about the difference between the night which is so swiftly passing, and is full of enemies and dangers, and the day which is going to dawn, and is full of light and peace and joy. We might have expected that he would have said, ‘Let us put on the festal robes.’ But no! ‘The night is far spent; the day is at hand.’ But the dress that befits the expectant of the day is not yet the robe of the feast, but it is ‘the armour’ which, put into plain words, means just this, that there is fighting, always fighting, to be done. If you are ever to belong to the day, you have to equip yourselves *now* with armour and weapons. I do not need to dwell upon that, but I do wish to insist upon this fact, that after all that may be truly said about growth in grace, and the peaceful approximation towards perfection in the Christian character, we

cannot dispense with the other element in progress, and that is fighting. We have to struggle for every step. *Growth* is not enough to define completely the process by which men become conformed to the image of the Father, and are 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Growth does express part of it, but only a part. Conflict is needed to come in, before you have the whole aspect of Christian progress before your minds. For there will always be antagonism without and traitors within. There will always be recalcitrant horses that need to be whipped up, and jibbing horses that need to be dragged forward, and shying ones that need to be violently coerced and kept in the traces. Conflict is the law, because of the enemies, and because of the conspiracy between the weakness within and the things without that appeal to it.

We hear a great deal to-day about being 'sanctified by faith.' I believe that as much as any man, but the office of faith is to bring us the power that cleanses, and the application of that power requires our work, and it requires our fighting. So it is not enough to say, 'Trust for your sanctifying as you have trusted for your justifying and acceptance,' but you have to work out what you get by your faith, and you will never work it out unless you fight against your unworthy self, and the temptations of the world. The garb of the candidate for the day is armour.

And there is another side to that same

thought, and that is, the more vivid our expectations of that blessed dawn the more complete should be our bracing on of the armour. The anticipation of that future, in very many instances, in the Christian Church, has led to precisely the opposite state of mind. It has induced people to drop into mere fantastic sentiment, or to ignore this contemptible present, and think that they have nothing to do with it, and are only ‘waiting for the coming of the Lord,’ and the like. Paul says, ‘Just because, on your eastern horizon, you can see the pink flush that tells that the night is gone, and the day is coming, therefore do not be a sentimentalist, do not be idle, do not be negligent or contemptuous of the daily tasks; but because you see it, put on the armour of light, and whether the time between the rising of the whole orb of the sun on the horizon be long or short, fill the hours with triumphant conflict. Put on the whole armour of light.’

Again, note here what the armour is. Of course that phrase, ‘the armour of light,’ may be nothing more than a little bit of colour put in by a picturesque imagination, and may suggest simply how the burnished steel would shine and glitter when the sunbeams smote it, and the glistening armour, like that of Spenser's Red Cross Knight, would make a kind of light in the dark cave, into which he went. Or it may mean ‘the armour that befits the light’; as is perhaps suggested by the antithesis ‘the works of darkness,’ which are to be ‘put off.’ These are

works that match the darkness, and similarly the armour is to be the armour that befits the light, and that can flash back its beams. But I think there is more than that in the expression. I would rather take the phrase to be parallel to another of this Apostle's, who speaks in 2nd Corinthians of the ‘armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.’ ‘Light’ makes the armour, ‘righteousness’ makes the armour. The two phrases say the same thing, the one in plain English, the other in figure, which being brought down to daily life is just this, that the true armour and weapon of a Christian man is Christian character. ‘Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,’ these are the pieces of armour, and these are the weapons which we are to wield. A Christian man fights against evil in himself by putting on good. The true way to empty the heart of sin is to fill the heart with righteousness. The lances of the light, according to the significant old Greek myth, slew pythons. The armour is ‘righteousness on the right hand and on the left.’ Stick to plain, simple, homely duties, and you will find that they will defend your heart against many a temptation. A flask that is full of rich wine may be plunged into the saltest ocean, and not a drop will find its way in. Fill your heart with righteousness; your lives—let them glisten in the light, and the light will be your armour. God is light, wherefore God cannot be tempted with evil. ‘Walk in the light, as He is in the light’ ... and ‘the blood of Jesus Christ

cleanseth from all sin.'

But there is another side to that thought, for if you will look, at your leisure, to the closing words of the chapter, you will find the Apostle's own exposition of what putting on the armour of light means. 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ'—that is his explanation of putting on 'the armour of light.' For 'once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord,' and it is in the measure in which we are united to Him, by the faith which binds us to Him, and by the love which works obedience and conformity, that we wear the invulnerable armour of light. Christ Himself is, and He supplies to all, the separate graces which Christian men can wear. We may say that He is 'the panoply of God,' as Paul calls it in Ephesians, and when we wear Him, and only in the measure in which we do wear Him, in that measure are we clothed with it. And so the last thing that I would point out here is that the obedience to these commands requires continual effort.

The Christians in Rome, to whom Paul was writing, were no novices in the Christian life. Long ago many of them had been brought to Him. But the oldest Christian amongst them needed the exhortation as much as the rawest recruit in the ranks. Continual renewal day by day is what we need, and it will not be secured without a great deal of work. Seeing that there is a 'putting off' to go along with the 'putting on,' the process is a very long one. ''Tis a lifelong

task till the lump be leavened.' It is a lifelong task till we strip off all the rags of this old self; and 'being clothed,' are not 'found naked.' It takes a lifetime to fathom Jesus; it takes a lifetime to appropriate Jesus, it takes a lifetime to be clothed with Jesus. And the question comes to each of us, have we 'put off the old man with his deeds'? Are we daily, as sure as we put on our clothes in the morning, putting on Christ the Lord?

For notice with what solemnity the Apostle gives the master His full, official, formal title here, 'put ye on the *Lord Jesus Christ*.' Do we put Him on as *Lord*; bowing our whole wills to Him, and accepting Him, His commandments, promises, providences, with glad submission? Do we put on *Jesus*, recognising in His manhood as our Brother not only the pattern of our lives, but the pledge that the pattern, by His help and love, is capable of reproduction in ourselves? Do we put Him on as 'the Lord Jesus *Christ*,' who was anointed with the Divine Spirit, that from the head it might flow, even to the skirts of the garments, and every one of us might partake of that unction and be made pure and clean thereby? 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,' and do it day by day, and then you have 'put on the whole armour of God.'

And when the day that is dawning has risen to its full, then, not till then, may we put off the armour and put on the white robe, lay aside the helmet, and have our brows wreathed with the

laurel, sheathe the sword, and grasp the palm, being ‘more than conquerors through Him who loved us,’ and fights in us, as well as for us.

THE LIMITS OF LIBERTY

‘So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. 14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. 16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: 17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. 18. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. 19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil

> for that man who eateth with offence. 21. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. 22. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. 23. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'—ROMANS xiv. 12-23.

The special case in view, in the section of which this passage is part, is the difference of opinion as to the lawfulness of eating certain meats. It is of little consequence, so far as the principles involved are concerned, whether these were the food which the Mosaic ordinances made unclean, or, as in Corinth, meats offered to idols. The latter is the more probable, and would be the more important in Rome. The two opinions on the point represented two tendencies of mind, which always exist; one more scrupulous, and one more liberal. Paul has been giving the former class the lesson they needed in the former part of this chapter; and he now turns to the 'stronger' brethren, and lays down the law for their conduct. We may, perhaps, best simply follow him, verse by verse.

We note then, first, the great thought with which he starts, that of the final judgment, in which each man shall give account of himself.

What has that to do with the question in hand? This, that it ought to keep us from premature and censorious judging. We have something more pressing to do than to criticise each other. Ourselves are enough to keep our hands full, without taking a lift of our fellows' conduct. And this, further, that, in view of the final judgment, we should hold a preliminary investigation on our own principles of action, and 'decide' to adopt as the overruling law for ourselves, that we shall do nothing which will make duty harder for our brethren. Paul habitually settled small matters on large principles, and brought the solemnities of the final account to bear on the marketplace and the meal.

In verse 13 he lays down the supreme principle for settling the case in hand. No Christian is blameless if he voluntarily acts so as to lay a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in another's path. Are these two things the same? Possibly, but a man may stumble, and not fall, and that which makes him stumble may possibly indicate a temptation to a less grave evil than that which makes him fall does. It may be noticed that in the sequel we hear of a brother's being 'grieved' first, and then of his being 'overthrown.' In any case, there is no mistake about the principle laid down and repeated in verse 21. It is a hard saying for some of us. Is my liberty to be restricted by the narrow scruples of 'strait-laced' Christians? Yes. Does not that make them masters, and attach too much importance to their narrowness? No. It recognises Christ as

Master, and all His servants as brethren. If the scrupulous ones go so far as to say to the more liberal, ‘You cannot be Christians if you do not do as we do’ then the limits of concession have been reached, and we are to do as Paul did, when he flatly refused to yield one hair's-breadth to the Judaisers. If a man says, You must adopt this, that, or the other limitation in conduct, or else you shall be unchurched, the only answer is, I will not. We are to be flexible as long as possible, and let weak brethren's scruples restrain our action. But if they insist on things indifferent as essential, a yet higher duty than that of regard to their weak consciences comes in, and faithfulness to Christ limits concession to His servants.

But, short of that extreme case, Paul lays down the law of curbing liberty in deference to ‘narrowness.’ In verse 14 he states with equal breadth the extreme principle of the liberal party, that nothing is unclean of itself. He has learned that ‘in the Lord Jesus.’ Before he was ‘in Him,’ he had been entangled in cobwebs of legal cleanness and uncleanness; but now he is free. But he adds an exception, which must be kept in mind by the liberal-minded section—namely, that a clean thing is unclean to a man who thinks it is. Of course, these principles do not affect the eternal distinctions of right and wrong. Paul is not playing fast and loose with the solemn, divine law which makes sin and righteousness independent of men's notions. He is speaking of things indifferent—ceremonial

observances and the like; and the modern analogies of these are conventional pieces of conduct, in regard to amusements and the like, which, in themselves, a Christian man can do or abstain from without sin.

Verse 15 is difficult to understand, if the 'for' at the beginning is taken strictly. Some commentators would read instead of it a simple 'but' which smooths the flow of thought. But possibly the verse assigns a reason for the law in verse 13, rather than for the statements in verse 14. And surely there is no stronger reason for tender consideration for even the narrowest scruples of Christians than the obligation to walk in love. Our common brotherhood binds us to do nothing that would even grieve one of the family. For instance, Christian men have different views of the obligations of Sunday observance. It is conceivable that a very 'broad' Christian might see no harm in playing lawn-tennis in his garden on a Sunday; but if his doing so scandalised, or, as Paul says, 'grieved' Christian people of less advanced views, he would be sinning against the law of love if he did it.

There are many other applications of the principle readily suggested. The principle is the thing to keep clearly in view. It has a wide field for its exercise in our times, and when the Christian brotherhood includes such diversities of culture and social condition. And that is a solemn deepening of it, 'Destroy not with thy

meat him for whom Christ died.' Note the almost bitter emphasis on 'thy,' which brings out not only the smallness of the gratification for which the mischief is done, but the selfishness of the man who will not yield up so small a thing to shield from evil which may prove fatal, a brother for whom Christ did not shrink from yielding up life. If He is our pattern, any sacrifice of tastes and liberties for our brother's sake is plain duty, and cannot be neglected without selfish sin. One great reason, then, for the conduct enjoined, is set forth in verse 15. It is the clear dictate of Christian love.

Another reason is urged in verses 16 to 18. It displays the true character of Christianity, and so reflects honour on the doer. 'Your good' is an expression for the whole sum of the blessings obtained by becoming Christians, and is closely connected with what is here meant by the 'kingdom of God.' That latter phrase seems here to be substantially equivalent to the inward condition in which they are who have submitted to the dominion of the will of God. It is 'the kingdom within us' which is 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' What have you won by your Christianity? the Apostle in effect says, Do you think that its purpose is mainly to give you greater licence in regard to these matters in question? If the most obvious thing in your conduct is your 'eating and drinking,' your whole Christian standing will be misconceived, and men will fancy that your religion permits laxity of life. But if, on the other

hand, you show that you are Christ's servants by righteousness, peace, and joy, you will be pleasing to God, and men will recognise that your religion is from Him, and that you are consistent professors of it.

Modern liberal-minded brethren can easily translate all this for to-day's use. Take care that you do not give the impression that your Christianity has its main operation in permitting you to do what your weaker brethren have scruples about. If you do not yield to them, but flaunt your liberty in their and the world's faces, your advanced enlightenment will be taken by rough-and-ready observers as mainly cherished because it procures you these immunities. Show by your life that you have the true spiritual gifts. Think more about them than about your 'breadth,' and superiority to 'narrow prejudices.' Realise the purpose of the Gospel as concerns your own moral perfecting, and the questions in hand will fall into their right place.

In verses 19 and 20 two more reasons are given for restricting liberty in deference to others' scruples. Such conduct contributes to peace. If truth is imperilled, or Christ's name in danger of being tarnished, counsels of peace are counsels of treachery; but there are not many things worth buying at the price of Christian concord. Such conduct tends to build up our own and others' Christian character. Concessions to the 'weak' may help them to become strong, but flying in the face of their scruples is sure to

hurt them, in one way or another.

In verse 15, the case was supposed of a brother's being grieved by what he felt to be laxity. That case corresponded to the stumbling-block of verse 13. A worse result seems contemplated in verse 20,—that of the weak brother, still believing that laxity was wrong, and yet being tempted by the example of the stronger to indulge in it. In that event, the responsibility of overthrowing what God had built lies at the door of the tempter. The metaphor of ‘overthrowing’ is suggested by the previous one of ‘edifying.’ Christian duty is mutual building up of character; inconsiderate exercise of ‘liberty’ may lead to pulling down, by inducing to imitation which conscience condemns.

From this point onwards, the Apostle first reiterates in inverse order his two broad principles, that clean things are unclean to the man who thinks them so, and that Christian obligation requires abstinence from permitted things if our indulgence tends to a brother's hurt. The application of the latter principle to the duty of total abstinence from intoxicants for the sake of others is perfectly legitimate, but it is an application, not the direct purpose of the Apostle's injunctions.

In verses 22 and 23, the section is closed by two exhortations, in which both parties, the strong and the weak, are addressed. The former

is spoken to in verse 22, the latter in verse 23. The strong brother is bid to be content with having his wider views, or ‘faith’—that is, certainty that his liberty is in accordance with Christ's will. It is enough that he should enjoy that conviction, only let him make sure that he can hold it as in God's sight, and do not let him flourish it in the faces of brethren whom it would grieve, or might lead to imitating his practice, without having risen to his conviction. And let him be quite sure that his conscience is entirely convinced, and not bribed by inclination; for many a man condemns himself by letting wishes dictate to conscience.

On the other hand, there is a danger that those who have scruples should, by the example of those who have not, be tempted to do what they are not quite sure is right. If you have any doubts, says Paul, the safe course is to abstain from the conduct in question. Perhaps a brother can go to the theatre without harm, if he believes it right to do so; but if you have any hesitation as to the propriety of going, you will be condemned as sinning if you do. You must not measure your corn by another man's bushel. Your convictions, not his, are to be your guides. ‘Faith’ is used here in a somewhat unusual sense. It means certitude of judgment. The last words of verse 23 have no such meaning as is sometimes extracted from them; namely, that actions, however pure and good, done by unbelievers, are of the nature of sin. They simply mean that whatever a Christian man does

without clear warrant of his judgment and conscience is sin to him, whatever it is to others.

TWO FOUNTAINS, ONE STREAM

> 'That we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.... 13. The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.'—ROMANS xv. 4, 13.

There is a river in Switzerland fed by two uniting streams, bearing the same name, one of them called the 'white,' one of them the 'grey,' or dark. One comes down from the glaciers, and bears half-melted snow in its white ripple; the other flows through a lovely valley, and is discoloured by its earth. They unite in one common current. So in these two verses we have two streams, a white and a black, and they both blend together and flow out into a common hope. In the former of them we have the dark stream—'through patience and comfort,' which implies affliction and effort. The issue and outcome of all difficulty, trial, sorrow, ought to be hope. And in the other verse we have the other valley, down which the light stream comes: 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.'

So both halves of the possible human

experience are meant to end in the same blessed result; and whether you go round on the one side of the sphere of human life, or whether you take the other hemisphere, you come to the same point, if you have travelled with God's hand in yours, and with Him for your Guide.

Let us look, then, at these two contrasted origins of the same blessed gift, the Christian hope.

I. We have, first of all, the hope that is the child of the night, and born in the dark.

'Whatsoever things,' says the Apostle, 'were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience,'—or rather *the brave perseverance*—'and consolation'—or rather perhaps *encouragement*—'of the Scriptures might have hope.' The written word is conceived as the source of patient endurance which acts as well as suffers. This grace Scripture works in us through the encouragement which it ministers in manifold ways, and the result of both is hope.

So, you see, our sorrows and difficulties are not connected with, nor do they issue in, bright hopefulness, except by reason of this connecting link. There is nothing in a man's troubles to make him hopeful. Sometimes, rather, they drive him into despair; but at all events, they seldom drive him to hopefulness, except where this link comes in. We cannot pass from the black frowning cliffs on one side of the gorge to the sunny tablelands on the other without a bridge

—and the bridge for a poor soul from the blackness of sorrow, and the sharp grim rocks of despair, to the smiling pastures of hope, with all their half-open blossoms, is builded in that Book, which tells us the meaning and purpose of them all; and is full of the histories of those who have fought and overcome, have hoped and not been ashamed.

Scripture is given for this among other reasons, that it may encourage us, and so may produce in us this great grace of active patience, if we may call it so.

The first thing to notice is, how Scripture gives encouragement—for such rather than consolation is the meaning of the word. It is much to dry tears, but it is more to stir the heart as with a trumpet call. Consolation is precious, but we need more for well-being than only to be comforted. And, surely, the whole tone of Scripture in its dealing with the great mystery of pain and sorrow, has a loftier scope than even to minister assuagement to grief, and to stay our weeping. It seeks to make us strong and brave to face and to master our sorrows, and to infuse into us a high-hearted courage, which shall not merely be able to accept the biting blasts, but shall feel that they bring a glow to the cheek and oxygen to the blood, while wrestling with them builds up our strength, and trains us for higher service. It would be a poor aim to comfort only; but to encourage—to make strong in heart, resolved in will, and incapable of being

overborne or crushed in spirit by any sorrows—that is a purpose worthy of the Book, and of the God who speaks through it.

This purpose, we may say, is effected by Scripture in two ways. It encourages us by its records, and by its revelation of principles.

Who can tell how many struggling souls have taken heart again, as they pondered over the sweet stories of sorrow subdued which stud its pages, like stars in its firmament? The tears shed long ago which God has put 'in His bottle,' and recorded in 'His book,' have truly been turned into pearls. That long gallery of portraits of sufferers, who have all trodden the same rough road, and been sustained by the same hand, and reached the same home, speaks cheer to all who follow them. Hearts wrung by cruel partings from those dearer to them than their own souls, turn to the pages which tell how Abraham, with calm sorrow, laid his Sarah in the cave at Macpelah; or how, when Jacob's eyes were dim that he could not see, his memory still turned to the hour of agony when Rachael died by him, and he sees clear in its light her lonely grave, where so much of himself was laid; or to the still more sacred page which records the struggle of grief and faith in the hearts of the sisters of Bethany. All who are anyways afflicted in mind, body, or estate find in the Psalms men speaking their deepest experiences before them; and the grand majesty of sorrow that marks 'the patience of Job,' and the flood of sunshine that bathes

him, revealing the ‘end of the Lord,’ have strengthened countless sufferers to bear and to hold fast, and to hope. We are all enough of children to be more affected by living examples than by dissertations, however true, and so Scripture is mainly history, revealing God by the record of His acts, and disclosing the secret of human life by telling us the experiences of living men.

But Scripture has another method of ministering encouragement to our often fainting and faithless hearts. It cuts down through all the complications of human affairs, and lays bare the innermost motive power. It not only shows us in its narratives the working of sorrow, and the power of faith, but it distinctly lays down the source and the purpose, the whence and the whither of all suffering. No man need quail or faint before the most torturing pains or most disastrous strokes of evil, who holds firmly the plain teaching of Scripture on these two points. They all come *from* my Father, and they all come *for* my good. It is a short and simple creed, easily apprehended. It pretends to no recondite wisdom. It is a homely philosophy which common intellects can grasp, which children can understand, and hearts half paralysed by sorrow can take in. So much the better. Grief and pain are so common that their cure had need to be easily obtained. Ignorant and stupid people have to writhe in agony as well as wise and clever ones, and until grief is the portion only of the cultivated classes, its healing must come from

something more universal than philosophy; or else the nettle would be more plentiful than the dock; and many a poor heart would be stung to death. Blessed be God! the Christian view of sorrow, while it leaves much unexplained, focuses a steady light on these two points; its origin and its end. 'He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness,' is enough to calm all agitation, and to make the faintest heart take fresh courage. With that double certitude clear before us, we can face anything. The slings and arrows which strike are no more flung blindly by an 'outrageous fortune,' but each bears an inscription, like the fabled bolts, which tells what hand drew the bow, and they come with His love.

Then, further, the courage thus born of the Scriptures produces another grand thing—patience, or rather perseverance. By that word is meant more than simply the passive endurance which is the main element in patience, properly so called. Such passive endurance is a large part of our duty in regard to difficulties and sorrows, but is never the whole of it. It is something to endure and even while the heart is breaking, to submit unmurmuring, but, transcendent as that is, it is but half of the lesson which we have to learn and to put in practice. For if all our sorrows have a disciplinary and educational purpose, we shall not have received them aright, unless we have tried to make that purpose effectual, by appropriating whatsoever moral and spiritual teaching they each have for us. Nor

does our duty stop there. For while one high purpose of sorrow is to deaden our hearts to earthly objects, and to lift us above earthly affections, no sorrow can ever relax the bonds which oblige us to duty. The solemn pressure of 'I ought,' is as heavy on the sorrowful as on the happy heart. We have still to toil, to press forward, in the sweat of our brow, to gain our bread, whether it be food for our bodies, or sustenance for our hearts and minds. Our responsibilities to others do not cease because our lives are darkened. Therefore, heavy or light of heart, we have still to stick to our work, and though we may never more be able to do it with the old buoyancy, still to do it with our might.

It is that dogged persistence in plain duty, that tenacious continuance in our course, which is here set forth as the result of the encouragement which Scripture gives. Many of us have all our strength exhausted in mere endurance, and have let obvious duties slip from our hands, as if we had done all that we could do when we had forced ourselves to submit. Submission would come easier if you took up some of those neglected duties, and you would be stronger for patience, if you used more of your strength for service. You do well if you do not sink under your burden, but you would do better if, with it on your shoulders, you would plod steadily along the road; and if you did, you would feel the weight less. It seems heaviest when you stand still doing nothing. Do not cease to toil because you suffer. You will feel your pain more

if you do. Take the encouragement which Scripture gives, that it may animate you to bate no jot of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer right onward.

And let the Scripture directly minister to you perseverance as well as indirectly supply it through the encouragement which it gives. It abounds with exhortations, patterns, and motives of such patient continuance in well-doing. It teaches us a solemn scorn of ills. It, angel-like, bears us up on soft, strong hands, lest we bruise ourselves on, or stumble over, the rough places on our roads. It summons us to diligence by the visions of the prize, and glimpses of the dread fate of the slothful, by all that is blessed in hope, and terrible in foreboding, by appeals to an enlightened self-regard, and by authoritative commands to conscience, by the pattern of the Master, and by the tender motives of love to Him to which He, Himself, has given voice. All these call on us to be followers of them who, through faith and perseverance, inherit the promises.

But we have yet another step to take. These two, the encouragement and perseverance produced by the right use of Scripture, will lead to hope.

It depends on how sorrow and trial are borne, whether they produce a dreary hopelessness which sometimes darkens into despair, or a brighter, firmer hope than more joyous days

knew. We cannot say that sorrow produces hope. It does not, unless we have this connecting link —the experience in sorrow of a God-given courage which falters not in the onward course, nor shrinks from any duty. But if, in the very press and agony, I am able, by God's grace, to endure nor cease to toil, I have, in myself, a living proof of His power, which entitles me to look forward with the sure confidence that, through all the uproar of the storm, He will bring me to my harbour of rest where there is peace. The lion once slain houses a swarm of bees who lay up honey in its carcase. The trial borne with brave persistence yields a store of sweet hopes. If we can look back and say, ‘Thou hast been with me in six troubles,’ it is good logic to look forward and say, ‘and in seven Thou wilt not forsake me.’ When the first wave breaks over the ship, as she clears the heads and heels over before the full power of the open sea, inexperienced landsmen think they are all going to the bottom, but they soon learn that there is a long way between rolling and foundering, and get to watch the highest waves towering above the bows in full confidence that these also will slip quietly beneath the keel as the others have done, and be left harmless astern.

The Apostle, in this very same letter, has another word parallel to this, in which he describes the issues of rightly-borne suffering when he says, ‘Tribulation worketh perseverance’—the same word that is used here —‘and perseverance worketh’ the proof in our

experience of a sustaining God; and the proof in our experience of a sustaining God works hope. We know that of ourselves we could not have met tribulation, and therefore the fact that we have been able to meet and overcome it is demonstration of a mightier power than our own, working in us, which we know to be from God, and therefore inexhaustible and ever ready to help. That is foundation firm enough to build solid fabrics of hope upon, whose bases go down to the centre of all things, the purpose of God, and whose summits, like the upward shooting spire of some cathedral, aspire to, and seem almost to touch, the heavens.

So hope is born of sorrow, when these other things come between. The darkness gives birth to the light, and every grief blazes up a witness to a future glory. Each drop that hangs on the wet leaves twinkles into rainbow light that proclaims the sun. The garish splendours of the prosperous day hide the stars, and through the night of our sorrow there shine, thickly sown and steadfast, the constellations of eternal hopes. The darker the midnight, the surer, and perhaps the nearer, the coming of the day. Sorrow has not had its perfect work unless it has led us by the way of courage and perseverance to a stable hope. Hope has not pierced to the rock, and builds only ‘things that can be shaken,’ unless it rests on sorrows borne by God's help.

II. So much then for the genealogy of one form of the Christian hope. But we have also a hope

that is born of the day, the child of sunshine and gladness; and that is set before us in the second of the two verses which we are considering, ‘The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.’

So then, ‘the darkness and the light are both alike’ to our hope, in so far as each may become the occasion for its exercise. It is not only to be the sweet juice expressed from our hearts by the winepress of calamities, but that which flows of itself from hearts ripened and mellowed under the sunshine of God-given blessedness.

We have seen that the bridge by which sorrow led to hope, is perseverance and courage; in this second analysis of the origin of hope, joy and peace are the bridge by which Faith passes over into it. Observe the difference: there is no direct connection between affliction and hope, but there is between joy and hope. We have no right to say, ‘Because I suffer, I shall possess good in the future’; but we have a right to say, ‘Because I rejoice’—of course with a joy in God—‘I shall never cease to rejoice in Him.’ Such joy is the prophet of its own immortality and completion. And, on the other hand, the joy and peace which are naturally the direct progenitors of Christian hope, are the children of faith. So that we have here two generations, as it were, of hope's ancestors;—Faith produces joy and peace, and these again produce hope.

Faith leads to joy and peace. Paul has found,

and if we only put it to the proof, we shall also find, that the simple exercise of simple faith fills the soul with '*all* joy and peace.' Gladness in all its variety and in full measure, calm repose in every kind and abundant in its still depth, will pour into my heart as water does into a vessel, on condition of my taking away the barrier and opening my heart through faith. Trust and thou shalt be glad. Trust, and thou shalt be calm. In the measure of thy trust shall be the measure of thy joy and peace.

Notice, further, how indissolubly connected the present exercise of faith is with the present experience of joy and peace. The exuberant language of this text seems a world too wide for anything that many professing Christians ever know even in the moments of highest elevation, and certainly far beyond the ordinary tenor of their lives. But it is no wonder that these should have so little joy, when they have so little faith. It is only while we are looking to Jesus that we can expect to have joy and peace. There is no flashing light on the surface of the mirror, but when it is turned full to the sun. Any interruption in the electric current is registered accurately by an interruption in the continuous line perforated on the telegraph ribbon; and so every diversion of heart and faith from Jesus Christ is recorded by the fading of the sunshine out of the heart, and the silencing of all the song-birds. Yesterday's faith will not bring joy to-day; you cannot live upon past experience, nor feed your souls with the memory of former

exercises of Christian faith. It must be like the manna, gathered fresh every day, else it will rot and smell foul. A present faith, and a present faith only, produces a present joy and peace. Is there, then, any wonder that so much of the ordinary experience of ordinary Christians should present a sadly broken line—a bright point here and there, separated by long stretches of darkness? The gaps in the continuity of their joy are the tell-tale indicators of the interruptions in their faith. If the latter were continuous, the former would be unbroken. Always believe, and you will always be glad and calm.

It is easy to see that this is the natural result of faith. The very act of confident reliance on another for all my safety and well-being has a charm to make me restful, so long as my reliance is not put to shame. There is no more blessed emotion than the tranquil happiness which, in the measure of its trust, fills every trustful soul. Even when its objects are poor, fallible, weak, ignorant dying men and women, trust brings a breath of more than earthly peace into the heart. But when it grasps the omnipotent, all-wise, immortal Christ, there are no bounds but its own capacity to the blessedness which it brings into the soul, because there is none to the all-sufficient grace of which it lays hold.

Observe again how accurately the Apostle defines for us the conditions on which Christian experience will be joyful and tranquil. It is ‘in

believing,' not in certain other exercises of mind, that these blessings are to be realised. And the forgetfulness of that plain fact leads to many good people's religion being very much more gloomy and disturbed than God meant it to be. For a large part of it consists in sadly testing their spiritual state, and gazing at their failures and imperfections. There is nothing cheerful or tranquillising in grubbing among the evils of your own heart, and it is quite possible to do that too much and too exclusively. If your favourite subject of contemplation in your religious thinking is yourself, no wonder that you do not get much joy and peace out of that. If you do, it will be of a false kind. If you are thinking more about your own imperfections than about Christ's pardon, more about the defects of your own love to Him than about the perfection of His love to you, if instead of practising faith you are absorbed in self-examination, and instead of saying to yourself, 'I know how foul and unworthy I am, but I look away from myself to my Saviour,' you are bewailing your sins and doubting whether you are a Christian, you need not expect God's angels of joy and peace to nestle in your heart. It is 'in believing,' and not in other forms of religious contemplation, however needful these may in their places be, that these fair twin sisters come to us and make their abode with us.

Then, the second step in this tracing of the origin of the hope which has the brighter source is the consideration that the joy and peace

which spring from faith, in their turn produce that confident anticipation of future and progressive good.

Herein lies the distinguishing blessedness of the Christian joy and peace, in that they carry in themselves the pledge of their own eternity. Here, and here only, the mad boast which is doomed to be so miserably falsified when applied to earthly gladness is simple truth. Here 'to-morrow *shall* be as this day and much more abundant.' Such joy has nothing in itself which betokens exhaustion, as all the less pure joys of earth have. It is manifestly not born for death, as are they. It is not fated, like all earthly emotions or passions, to expire in the moment of its completeness, or even by sudden revulsion to be succeeded by its opposite. Its sweetness has no after pang of bitterness. It is not true of this gladness, that 'Hereof cometh in the end despondency and madness,' but its destiny is to 'remain' as long as the soul in which it unfolds shall exist, and 'to be full' as long as the source from which it flows does not run dry.

So that the more we experience the present blessedness, which faith in Christ brings us, the more shall we be sure that nothing in the future, either in or beyond time, can put an end to it; and hence a hope that looks with confident eyes across the gorge of death, to the 'shining tablelands' on the other side, and is as calm as certitude, shall be ours. To the Christian soul, rejoicing in the conscious exercise of faith and

the conscious possession of its blessed results, the termination of a communion with Christ, so real and spiritual, by such a trivial accident as death, seems wildly absurd and therefore utterly impossible. Just as Christ's Resurrection seems inevitable as soon as we grasp the truth of His divine nature, and it becomes manifestly impossible that He, being such as He is—should be holden of death,' being such as it is, so for His children, when once they come to know the realities of fellowship with their Lord, they feel the entire dissimilarity of these to anything in the realm which is subjected to the power of death, and to know it to be as impossible that these purely spiritual experiences should be reduced to inactivity, or meddled with by it, as that a thought should be bound with a cord or a feeling fastened with fetters. They, and death, belong to two different regions. It can work its will on 'this wide world, and all its fading sweets'—but is powerless in the still place where the soul and Jesus hold converse, and all His joy passes into His servant's heart. I saw, not long since, in a wood a mass of blue wild hyacinths, that looked like a little bit of heaven dropped down upon earth. You and I may have such a tiny bit of heaven itself lying amidst all the tangle of our daily lives, if only we put our trust in Christ, and so get into our hearts some little portion of that joy that is unspeakable, and that peace that passeth understanding.

Thus, then, the sorrows of the earthly experience and the joys of the Christian life will

blend together to produce the one blessed result of a hope that is full of certainty, and is the assurance of immortality. There is no rainbow in the sky unless there be both a black cloud and bright sunshine. So, on the blackest, thickest thunder-mass of our sorrows, if smitten into moist light by the sunshine of joy and peace drawn from Jesus Christ by faith, there may be painted the rainbow of hope, the many-coloured, steadfast token of the faithful covenant of the faithful God.

JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING

> 'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.'—ROMANS xv. 13.

With this comprehensive and lofty petition the Apostle closes his exhortation to the factions in the Roman Church to be at unity. The form of the prayer is moulded by the last words of a quotation which he has just made, which says that in the coming Messiah 'shall the Gentiles hope.' But the prayer itself is not an instance of being led away by a word—in form, indeed, it is shaped by verbal resemblance; in substance it points to the true remedy for religious controversy. Fill the contending parties with a fuller spiritual life, and the ground of their

differences will begin to dwindle, and look very contemptible. When the tide rises, the little pools on the rocks are all merged into one.

But we may pass beyond the immediate application of these words, and see in them the wish, which is also a promise, and like the exhibition of every ideal is a command. This is Paul's conception of the Christian life as it might and should be, in one aspect. You notice that there is not a word in it about conduct. It goes far deeper than action. It deals with the springs of action in the individual life. It is the depths of spiritual experience here set forth which will result in actions that become a Christian. And in these days, when all around us we see a shallow conception of Christianity, as if it were concerned principally with conduct and men's relations with one another, it is well to go down into the depths, and to remember that whilst 'Do, do, do!' is very important, 'Be, be, be!' is the primary commandment. Conduct is a making visible of personality, and the Scripture teaching which says first faith and then works is profoundly philosophical as well as Christian. So we turn away here from externals altogether, and regard the effect of Christianity on the inward life.

I. I wish to notice man's faith and God's filling as connected, and as the foundation of everything.

'The God of hope fill you ...'—let us leave out

the intervening words for a moment—'in believing.' Now, you notice that Paul does not stay to tell us what or whom we are to believe in, or on. He takes that for granted, and his thought is fastened, for the moment, not on the object but on the act of faith. And he wishes to drive home to us this, that the attitude of trust is the necessary prerequisite condition of God's being able to fill a man's soul, and that God's being able to fill a man's soul is the necessary consequence of a man's trust. Ah, brethren, we cannot altogether shut God out from our spirits. There are loving and gracious gifts that, as our Lord tells us, He makes to 'fall on the unthankful and the evil.' His rain is not like the summer showers that we sometimes see, that fall in one spot and leave another dry; nor like the destructive thunderstorms, that come down bringing ruin upon one cane-brake and leave the plants in the next standing upright. But the best, the highest, the truly divine gifts which He is yearning to give to us all, cannot be given except there be consent, trust, and desire for them. You can shut your hearts or you can open them. And just as the wind will sigh round some hermetically closed chamber in vain search for a cranny, and the man within may be asphyxiated though the atmosphere is surging up its waves all round his closed domicile, so by lack of our faith, which is at once trust, consent, and desire, we shut out the gift with which God would fain fill our spirits. You can take a porous pottery vessel, wrap it up in waxcloth, pitch it all over,

and then drop it into mid-Atlantic, and not a drop will find its way in. And that is what we can do with ourselves, so that although in Him ‘we live and move and have our being,’ and are like the earthen vessel in the ocean, no drop of the blessed moisture will ever find its way into the heart. There must be man's faith before there can be God's filling.

Further, this relation of the two things suggests to us that a consequence of a Christian man's faith is the direct action of God upon him. Notice how the Apostle puts that truth in a double form here, in order that he may emphasise it, using one form of expression, involving the divine, direct activity, at the beginning of his prayer, and another at the end, and so enclosing, as it were, within a great casket of the divine action, all the blessings, the flashing jewels, which he desires his Roman friends to possess. ‘The God of hope fill you ... through the power of the Holy Ghost.’ I wish I could find words by which I could bear in upon the ordinary type of the Evangelical Christianity of this generation anything like the depth and earnestness of my own conviction that, for lack of a proportionate development of that great truth, of the direct action of the giving God on the believing heart, it is weakened and harmed in many ways. Surely He that made my spirit can touch my spirit; surely He who filleth all things according to their capacity can Himself enter into and fill the spirit which is opened for Him by simple faith. We do not need wires for

the telegraphy between heaven and the believing soul, but He comes directly to, and speaks in, and moves upon, and moulds and blesses, the waiting heart. And until you know, by your own experience rightly interpreted, that there is such a direct communion between the giving God and the recipient believing spirit, you have yet to learn the deepest depth, and the most blessed blessedness, of Christian faith and experience. For lack of it a hundred evils beset modern Christianity. For lack of it men fix their faith so exclusively as that the faith is itself harmed thereby, on the past act of Christ's death on the Cross. You will not suspect me of minimising that, but I beseech you remember one climax of the Apostle's which, though not bearing the same message as my text, is in harmony with it, ‘Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.’ And remember that Christ Himself bestows the gift of His Divine Spirit as the result of the humiliation and the agony of His Cross. Faith brings the direct action of the giving God.

And one more word about this first part of my text: the result of that direct action is complete —‘the God of hope fill you’ with no shrunken stream, no painful trickle out of a narrow rift in the rock, but a great exuberance which will pass into a man's nature in the measure of his capacity, which is the measure of his trust and desire. There are two limits to God's gifts to men: the one is the limitless limit of God's

infinitude, the other is the working limit—our capacity—and that capacity is precisely measured, as the capacity of some built-in vessel might be measured by a little gauge on the outside, by our faith. ‘The God of hope’ fills you in ‘believing,’ and ‘according to thy faith shall it be unto thee.’

II. Notice the joy and peace which come from the direct action of the God of hope on the believer's soul.

Now, it is not only towards God that we exercise trust, but wherever it is exercised, to some extent, and in the measure in which the object on which it rests is discovered by experience to be worthy, it produces precisely these results. Whoever trusts is at peace, just as much as he trusts. His confidence may be mistaken, and there will come a tremendous awakening if it is, and the peace will be shattered like some crystal vessel dashed upon an iron pavement, but so long as a man's mind and heart are in the attitude of dependence upon another, conceived to be dependable, one knows that there are few phases of tranquillity and blessedness which are sweeter and deeper than that. ‘The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her’—that is one illustration, and a hundred more might be given. And if you will take that attitude of trust which, even when it twines round some earthly prop, is upheld for a time, and bears bright flowers—if you take it and twine it round the steadfast foundations of the

Throne of God, what can shake that sure repose? ‘Joy and peace’ will come when the Christian heart closes with its trust, which is God in Christ.

He that believes has found the short, sure road to joy and peace, because his relations are set right with God. For these relations are the disturbing elements in all earthly tranquillity, and like the skeleton at the feast in all earthly joy, and a man can never, down to the roots of his being, be at rest until he is quite sure that there is nothing wrong between him and God. And so believing, we come to that root of all real gladness which is anything better than a crackling of thorns under a pot, and to that beginning of all true tranquillity. Joy in the Lord and peace with God are the parents of all joy and peace that are worthy of the name.

And that same faith will again bring these two bright-winged angels into the most saddened and troubled lives, because that faith brings right relations with ourselves. For our inward strifes stuff thorns into the pillow of our repose, and mingle bitterness with the sweetest, foaming draughts of our earthly joys. If a man's conscience and inclinations pull him two different ways, he is torn asunder as by wild horses. If a man has a hungry heart, for ever yearning after unattained and impossible blessings, then there is no rest there. If a man's little kingdom within him is all anarchical, and each passion and appetite setting up for itself,

then there is no tranquillity. But if by faith we let the God of hope come in, then hungry hearts are satisfied, and warring dispositions are harmonised, and the conscience becomes quieted, and fair imaginations fill the chamber of the spirit, and the man is at rest, because he himself is unified by the faith and fear of God.

And the same faith brings joy and peace because it sets right our relations with other people, and with all externals. If I am living in an atmosphere of trust, then sorrow will never be absolute, nor have exclusive monopoly and possession of my spirit. But there will be the paradox, and the blessedness, of Christian experience, 'as sorrowful yet always rejoicing.' For the joy of the Christian life has its source far away beyond the swamps from which the sour drops of sorrow may trickle, and it is possible that, like the fabled fire that burned under water, the joy of the Lord may be bright in my heart, even when it is drenched in floods of calamity and distress.

And so, brethren, the joy and peace that come from faith will fill the heart which trusts. Only remember how emphatically the Apostle here puts these two things together, 'joy and peace in believing.' As long as, and not a moment longer than, you are exercising the Christian act of trust, will you be experiencing the Christian blessedness of 'joy and peace.' Unscrew the pipe, and in an instant the water ceases to flow. Touch the button and switch off, and out goes the light.

Some Christian people fancy they can live upon past faith. You will get no present joy and peace out of past faith. The rain of this day twelve months will not moisten the parched ground of to-day. Yesterday's religion was all used up yesterday. And if you would have a continuous flow of joy and peace through your lives, keep up a uniform habit and attitude of trust in God. You will get it then; you will get it in no other way.

III. Lastly, note the hope which springs from this experience of joy and peace.

'The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope.' Here, again, the Apostle does not trouble himself to define the object of the hope. In this, as in the former clause, his attention is fixed upon the emotion, not upon that towards which it goes out. And just as there was no need to say in whom it was that the Christian man was to believe, so there is no room to define what it is that the Christian man has a right to hope for. For his hope is intended to cover all the future, the next moment, or to-morrow, or the dimmest distance where time has ceased to be, and eternity stands unmoved. The attitude of the Christian mind ought to be a cheery optimism, an unconquerable hope. 'The best has yet to be' is the true Christian thought in contemplating the future for myself, for my dear ones, for God's Church, and for God's universe.

And the truest basis on which that hope can rest is the experience granted to us, on condition of our faith, of a present, abundant possession of the joy and peace which God gives. The gladder you are to-day, if the gladness comes from the right source, the surer you may be that that gladness will never end. That is not what befalls men who live by earthly joys. For the more poignant, precious, and, as we faithlessly think, indispensable some of these are to us, the more into their sweetest sweetness creeps the dread thought: 'This is too good to last; this must pass.' We never need to think that about the peace and joy that come to us through believing. For they, in their sweetness, prophesy perpetuity. I need not dwell upon the thought that the firmest, most personally precious convictions of an eternity of future blessedness, rise and fall in a Christian consciousness with the purity and the depth of its own experience of the peace and joy of the Gospel. The more you have of Jesus Christ in your lives and hearts to-day, the surer you will be that whatever death may do, it cannot touch that, and the more ludicrously impossible it will seem that anything that befalls this poor body can touch the bond that knits us to Jesus Christ. Death can separate us from a great deal. Its sharp scythe cuts through all other bonds, but its edge is turned when it is tried against the golden chain that binds the believing soul to the Christ in whom he has believed.

So, brethren, there is the ladder—begin at the bottom step, with faith in Jesus Christ. That will

bring God's direct action into your spirit, through His Holy Spirit, and that one gift will break up into an endless multiplicity of blessings, just as a beam of light spilt upon the surface of the ocean breaks into diamonds in every wave, and that ‘joy and peace’ will kindle in your hearts a hope fed by the great words of the Lord: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,’ ‘My joy shall remain in you, and your joy shall be full,’ ‘He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.’

PHŒBE

> 'I commend unto you Phœbe our sister, who is a servant of the Church that is at Cenchrea: 2. That ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the Saints, and that ye assist her in whatsover matter she may have need of you: for she herself hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self.'—ROMANS xvi. 1, 2 (R. V.).

This is an outline picture of an else wholly unknown person. She, like most of the other names mentioned in the salutations in this chapter, has had a singular fate. Every name, shadowy and unreal as it is to us, belonged to a human life filled with hopes and fears, plunged sometimes in the depths of sorrows, struggling with anxieties and difficulties; and all the agitations have sunk into forgetfulness and calm. There is left to the world an immortal remembrance, and scarcely a single fact associated with the undying names.

Note the person here disclosed.

A little rent is made in the dark curtain through which we see as with an incandescent light concentrated for a moment upon her, one of the many good women who helped Paul, as their sisters had helped Paul's Master, and who

thereby have won, little as either Paul or she thought it, an eternal commemoration. Her name is a purely idolatrous one, and stamps her as a Greek, and by birth probably a worshipper of Apollo. Her Christian associations were with the Church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, of which little Christian community nothing further is known. But if we take into account the hideous immoralities of Corinth, we shall deem it probable that the port, with its shifting maritime population, was, like most seaports, a soil in which goodness was hard put to it to grow, and a church had much against which to struggle. To be a Christian at Cenchrea can have been no light task. Travellers in Egypt are told that Port Said is the wickedest place on the face of the earth; and in Phœbe's home there would be a like drift of disreputables of both sexes and of all nationalities. It was fitting that one good woman should be recorded as redeeming womanhood there. We learn of her that she was a ‘servant,’ or, as the margin preferably reads, a ‘deaconess of the Church which is at Cenchrea’; and in that capacity, by gentle ministrations and the exhibition of purity and patient love, as well as by the gracious administration of material help, had been a ‘succourer of many.’ There is a whole world of unmentioned kindnesses and a life of self-devotion hidden away under these few words. Possibly the succour which she administered was her own gift. She may have been rich and influential, or perhaps she but distributed the Church's bounty; but in any case

the gift was sweetened by the giver's hand, and the succour was the impartation of a woman's sympathy more than the bestowment of a donor's gift. Sometime or other, and somehow or other, she had had the honour and joy of helping Paul, and no doubt that opportunity would be to her a crown of service. She was now on the point of taking the long journey to Rome on her own business, and the Apostle bespeaks for her help from the Roman Church ‘in whatsoever matter she may have need of you,’ as if she had some difficult affair on hand, and had no other friends in the city. Possibly then she was a widow, and perhaps had had some lawsuit or business with government authorities, with whom a word from some of her brethren in Rome might stand her in good stead. Apparently she was the bearer of this epistle, which would give her a standing at once in the Roman Church, and she came among them with a halo round her from the whole-hearted commendation of the Apostle.

Mark the lessons from this little picture.

We note first the remarkable illustration here given of the power of the new bond of a common faith. The world was then broken up into sections, which were sometimes bitterly antagonistic and at others merely rigidly exclusive. The only bond of union was the iron fetter of Rome, which crushed the people, but did not knit them together. But here are Paul the Jew, Phœbe the Greek, and the Roman readers

of the epistle, all fused together by the power of the divine love that melted their hearts, and the common faith that unified their lives. The list of names in this chapter, comprising as it does men and women of many nationalities, and some slaves as well as freemen, is itself a wonderful testimony of the truth of Paul's triumphant exclamation in another epistle, that in Christ there is ‘neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female.’

The clefts have closed, and the very line of demarcation is obliterated; and these clefts were deeper than any of which we moderns have had experience. It remains something like a miracle that the members of Paul's churches could ever be brought together, and that their consciousness of oneness could ever overpower the tremendous divisive forces. We sometimes wonder at their bickerings; we ought rather to wonder at their unity, and be ashamed of the importance which we attach to our infinitely slighter mutual disagreements. The bond that was sufficient to make the early Christians all one in Christ Jesus seems to have lost its binding power to-day, and, like an used-up elastic band, to have no clasping grip left in it.

Another thought which we may connect with the name of Phœbe is the characteristic place of women in Christianity.

The place of woman amongst the Jews was indeed free and honourable as compared with

her position either in Greece or Rome, but in none of them was she placed on the level of man, nor regarded mainly in the aspect of an equal possessor of the same life of the Spirit. But a religion which admits her to precisely the same position of a supernatural life as is granted to man, necessarily relegates to a subordinate position all differences of sex as it does all other natural distinctions. The women who ministered to Jesus of their substance, the two sisters of Bethany, the mourners at Calvary, the three who went through the morning twilight to the tomb, were but the foremost conspicuous figures in a great company through all the ages who have owed to Jesus their redemption, not only from the slavery of sin, but from the stigma of inferiority as man's drudge or toy. To the world in which Paul lived it was a strange, new thought that women could share with man in his loftiest emotions. Historically the emancipation of one half of the human race is the direct result of the Christian principle that all are one in Christ Jesus. In modern life the emancipation has been too often divorced from its one sure basis, and we have become familiar with the sight of the ‘advanced’ women who have advanced so far as to have lost sight of the Christ to whom they owe their freedom. The picture of Phœbe in our text might well be commended to all such as setting forth the most womanlike ideal. She was ‘a succourer of many.’ Her ministry was a ministry of help; and surely such gentle ministry is that which most befits

the woman's heart and comes most graciously to the woman's fingers.

Phœbe then may well represent to us the ministry of succour in this world of woe and need. There is ever a cry, even in apparently successful lives, for help and a helper. Man's clumsy hand is but too apt to hurt where it strives to soothe, and nature itself seems to devolve on the swifter sympathies and more delicate perceptions of woman the joy of binding up wounded spirits. In the verses immediately following our text we read of another woman to whom was entrusted a more conspicuous and direct form of service. Priscilla ‘taught Apollos the way of God more perfectly,’ and is traditionally represented as being united with her husband in evangelistic work. But it is not merely prejudice which takes Phœbe rather than Priscilla as the characteristic type of woman's special ministry. We must remember our Lord's teaching, that the giver of ‘a cup of cold water in the name of a prophet’ in some measure shares in the prophet's work, and will surely share in the prophet's reward. She who helped Paul must have entered into the spirit of Paul's labours; and He to whom all service that is done from the same motive is one in essence, makes no difference between him whose thirsty lips drink and her whose loving hand presents the cup of cold water. ‘Small service is true service while it lasts.’ Paul and Phœbe were one in ministry and one in its recompense.

We may further see in her a foreshadowing of the reward of lowly service, though it be only the service of help. Little did Phœbe dream that her name would have an eternal commemoration of her unnoticed deeds of kindness and aid, standing forth to later generations and peoples of whom she knew nothing, as worthy of eternal remembrance. For those of us who have to serve unnoticed and unknown, here is an instance and a prophecy which may stimulate and encourage. ‘Surely I will never forget any of their works’ is a gracious promise which the most obscure and humble of us may take to heart, and sustained by which, we may patiently pursue a way on which there are ‘none to praise and very few to love.’ It matters little whether our work be noticed or recorded by men, so long as we know that it is written in the Lamb's book of life and that He will one day proclaim it ‘before the Father in heaven and His angels.’

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA

‘Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus; 4. (Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but so all the churches of the Gentiles:) 5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.’—ROMANS xvi. 3-5.

It has struck me that this wedded couple present, even in the scanty notices that we have of them, some interesting points which may be worth while gathering together.

Now, to begin with, we are told that Aquila was a Jew. We are not told whether Priscilla was a Jewess or no. So far as her name is concerned, she may have been, and very probably was, a Roman, and, if so, we have in their case a ‘mixed marriage’ such as was not uncommon then, and of which Timothy's parents give another example. She is sometimes called Prisca, which was her proper name, and sometimes Priscilla, an affectionate diminutive. The two had been living in Rome, and had been banished under the decree of the Emperor, just as Jews have been banished from England and from every country in Europe again and again. They came from Rome to Corinth, and were, perhaps, intending to go back to Aquila's native place, Pontus, when Paul met them in the latter city, and changed their whole lives. His association with them began in a purely commercial partnership. But as they abode together and worked at their trade, there would be many earnest talks about the Christ, and these ended in both husband and wife becoming disciples. The bond thus knit was too close to be easily severed, and so, when Paul sailed across the Ægean for Ephesus, his two new friends kept with him, which they would be the more ready to do, as they had no settled home. They remained with him during his somewhat

lengthened stay in the great Asiatic city; for we find in the first Epistle to the Corinthians which was written from Ephesus about that time, that the Apostle sends greetings from 'Priscilla and Aquila and the Church which is in their house.' But when Paul left Ephesus they seem to have stayed behind, and afterwards to have gone their own way.

About a year after the first Epistle to the Corinthians was sent from Ephesus, the Epistle to the Romans was written, and we find there the salutation to Priscilla and Aquila which is my text. So this wandering couple were back again in Rome by that time, and settled down there for a while. They are then lost sight of for some time, but probably they returned to Ephesus. Once more we catch a glimpse of them in Paul's last letter, written some seven or eight years after that to the Romans. The Apostle knows that death is near, and, at that supreme moment, his heart goes out to these two faithful companions, and he sends them a parting token of his undying love. There are only two messages to friends in the second Epistle to Timothy, and one of these is to Prisca and Aquila. At the mouth of the valley of the shadow of death he remembered the old days in Corinth, and the, to us, unknown instance of devotion which these two had shown, when, for his life, they laid down their own necks.

Such is all that we know of Priscilla and Aquila. Can we gather any lessons from these

scattered notices thus thrown together?

I. Here is an object lesson as to the hallowing effect of Christianity on domestic life and love.

Did you ever notice that in the majority of the places where these two are named, if we adopt the better readings, Priscilla's name comes first? She seems to have been ‘the better man of the two’; and Aquila drops comparatively into the background. Now, such a couple, and a couple in which the wife took the foremost place, was an absolute impossibility in heathenism. They are a specimen of what Christianity did in the primitive age, all over the Empire, and is doing to-day, everywhere—lifting woman to her proper place. These two, yoked together in ‘all exercise of noble end,’ and helping one another in Christian work, and bracketed together by the Apostle, who puts the wife first, as his fellow-helpers in Christ Jesus, stands before us as a living picture of what our sweet and sacred family life and earthly loves may be glorified into, if the light from heaven shines down upon them, and is thankfully received into them.

Such a house as the house of Prisca and Aquila is the product of Christianity, and such ought to be the house of every professing Christian. For we should all make our homes as ‘tabernacles of the righteous,’ in which the voice of joy and rejoicing is ever heard. Not only wedded love, but family love, and all earthly love, are then most precious, when into them there flows the

ennobling, the calming, the transfiguring thought of Christ and His love to us.

Again, notice that, even in these scanty references to our two friends, there twice occurs that remarkable expression ‘the church that is in their house.’ Now, I suppose that that gives us a little glimpse into the rudimentary condition of public worship in the primitive church. It was centuries after the time of Priscilla and Aquila before circumstances permitted Christians to have buildings devoted exclusively to public worship. Up to a very much later period than that which is covered by the New Testament, they gathered together wherever was most convenient. And, I suppose, that both in Rome and Ephesus, this husband and wife had some room—perhaps the workshop where they made their tents, spacious enough for some of the Christians of the city to meet together in. One would like people who talk so much about ‘the Church,’ and refuse the name to individual societies of Christians, and even to an aggregate of these, unless it has ‘bishops,’ to explain how the little gathering of twenty or thirty people in the workshop attached to Aquila's house, is called by the Apostle without hesitation ‘the church which is in their house.’ It was a part of the Holy Catholic Church, but it was also ‘a Church,’ complete in itself, though small in numbers. We have here not only a glimpse into the manner of public worship in early times, but we may learn something of far more consequence for us, and find here a suggestion

of what our homes ought to be. ‘The Church that is in thy house’—fathers and mothers that are responsible for your homes and their religious atmosphere, ask yourselves if any one would say that about your houses, and if they could not, why not?

II. We may get here another object lesson as to the hallowing of common life, trade, and travel.

It does not appear that, after their stay in Ephesus, Aquila and his wife were closely attached to Paul's person, and certainly they did not take any part as members of what we may call his evangelistic staff. They seem to have gone their own way, and as far as the scanty notices carry us, they did not meet Paul again, after the time when they parted in Ephesus. Their gipsy life was probably occasioned by Aquila's going about—as was the custom in old days when there were no trades-unions or organised centres of a special industry—to look for work where he could find it. When he had made tents in Ephesus for a while, he would go on somewhere else, and take temporary lodgings there. Thus he wandered about as a working man. Yet Paul calls him his ‘fellow worker in Christ Jesus’; and he had, as we saw, a Church in his house. A roving life of that sort is not generally supposed to be conducive to depth of spiritual life. But their wandering course did not hurt these two. They took their religion with them. It did not depend on locality, as does that of a great many people who are very religious in

the town where they live, and, when they go away for a holiday, seem to leave their religion, along with their silver plate, at home. But no matter whether they were in Corinth or Ephesus or Rome, Aquila and Priscilla took their Lord and Master with them, and while working at their camel's-hair tents, they were serving God.

Dear brethren, what we want is not half so much preachers such as my brethren and I, as Christian tradesmen and merchants and travellers, like Aquila and Priscilla.

III. Again, we may see here a suggestion of the unexpected issues of our lives.

Think of that complicated chain of circumstances, one end of which was round Aquila and the other round the young Pharisee in Jerusalem. It steadily drew them together until they met in that lodging at Corinth. Claudius, in the fullness of his absolute power, said, 'Turn all these wretched Jews out of my city. I will not have it polluted with them any more. Get rid of them!' So these two were uprooted, and drifted to Corinth. We do not know why they chose to go thither; perhaps they themselves did not know why; but God knew. And while they were coming thither from the west, Paul was coming thither from the east and north. He was 'prevented by the Spirit from speaking in Asia,' and driven across the sea against his intention to Neapolis, and hounded out of Philippi and Thessalonica and Beræa; and

turned superciliously away from Athens; and so at last found himself in Corinth, face to face with the tentmaker from Rome and his wife. Then one of the two men said, 'Let us join partnership together, and set up here as tent-makers for a time.' What came out of this unintended and apparently chance meeting?

The first thing was the conversion of Aquila and his wife; and the effects of that are being realised by them in heaven at this moment, and will go on to all eternity.

So, in the infinite complexity of events, do not let us worry ourselves by forecasting, but let us trust, and be sure that the Hand which is pushing us is pushing us in the right direction, and that He will bring us, by a right, though a roundabout way, to the City of Habitation. It seems to me that we poor, blind creatures in this world are somewhat like a man in a prison, groping with his hand in the dark along the wall, and all unawares touching a spring which moves a stone, disclosing an aperture that lets in a breath of purer air, and opens the way to freedom. So we go on as if stumbling in the dark, and presently, without our knowing what we do, by some trivial act we originate a train of events which influences our whole future.

Again, when Aquila and Priscilla reached Ephesus they formed another chance acquaintance in the person of a brilliant young Alexandrian, whose name was Apollos. They

found that he had good intentions and a good heart, but a head very scantily furnished with the knowledge of the Gospel. So they took him in hand, just as Paul had taken them. If I may use such a phrase, they did not know how large a fish they had caught. They had no idea what a mighty power for Christ was lying dormant in that young man from Alexandria who knew so much less than they did. They instructed Apollos, and Apollos became second only to Paul in the power of preaching the Gospel. So the circle widens and widens. God's grace fructifies from one man to another, spreading onward and outward. And all Apollos' converts, and *their* converts, and *theirs* again, right away down the ages, we may trace back to Priscilla and Aquila.

So do not let us be anxious about the further end of our deeds—viz. their results; but be careful about the nearer end of them—viz. their motives; and God will look after the other end. Seeing that 'thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that,' or how much any of them will prosper, let us grasp *all* opportunities to do His will and glorify His name.

IV. Further, here we have an instance of the heroic self-devotion which love to Christ kindles.

'For my sake they laid down their own necks.' We do not know to what Paul is referring: perhaps to that tumult in Ephesus, where he certainly was in danger. But the language seems

rather more emphatic than such danger would warrant. Probably it was at some perilous juncture of which we know nothing (for we know very little, after all, of the details of the Apostle's life), in which Aquila and Priscilla had said, ‘Take us and let him go. He can do a great deal more for God than we can do. We will put our heads on the block, if he may still live.’ That magnanimous self-surrender was a wonderful token of the passionate admiration and love which the Apostle inspired, but its deepest motive was love to Christ and not to Paul only.

Faith in Christ and love to Him ought to turn cowards into heroes, to destroy thoughts of self, and to make the utmost self-sacrifice natural, blessed, and easy. We are not called upon to exercise heroism like Priscilla's and Aquila's, but there is as much heroism needed for persistently Christian life, in our prosaic daily circumstances, as has carried many a martyr to the block, and many a tremulous woman to the pyre. We can all be heroes; and if the love of Christ is in us, as it should be, we shall all be ready to ‘yield ourselves living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service.’

Long years after, the Apostle, on the further edge of life, looked back over it all; and, whilst much had become dim, and some trusted friends had dropped away, like Demas, he saw these two, and waved them his last greeting before he turned to the executioner—‘Salute Prisca and Aquila.’ Paul's Master is not less mindful of His

friends' love, or less eloquent in the praise of their faithfulness, or less sure to reward them with the crown of glory. 'Whoso confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before the angels in heaven.'

TWO HOUSEHOLDS

> '... Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. 11. ... Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.'—ROMANS xvi. 10, 11.

There does not seem much to be got out of these two sets of salutations to two households in Rome; but if we look at them with eyes in our heads, and some sympathy in our hearts, I think we shall get lessons worth the treasuring.

In the first place, here are two sets of people, members of two different households, and that means mainly, if not exclusively, slaves. In the next place, in each case there was but a section of the household which was Christian. In the third place, in neither household is the master included in the greeting. So in neither case was *he* a Christian.

We do not know anything about these two persons, men of position evidently, who had large households. But the most learned of our

living English commentators of the New Testament has advanced a very reasonable conjecture in regard to each of them. As to the first of them, Aristobulus: that wicked old King Herod, in whose life Christ was born, had a grandson of the name, who spent all his life in Rome, and was in close relations with the Emperor of that day. He had died some little time before the writing of this letter. As to the second of them, there is a very notorious Narcissus, who plays a great part in the history of Rome just a little while before Paul's period there, and he, too, was dead. And it is more than probable that the slaves and retainers of these two men were transferred in both cases to the emperor's household and held together in it, being known as Aristobulus' men and Narcissus' men. And so probably the Christians among them are the brethren to whom these salutations are sent.

Be that as it may, I think that if we look at the two groups, we shall get out of them some lessons.

I. The first of them is this: the penetrating power of Christian truth. Think of the sort of man that the master of the first household was, if the identification suggested be accepted. He is one of that foul Herodian brood, in all of whom the bad Idumæan blood ran corruptly. The grandson of the old Herod, the brother of Agrippa of the Acts of the Apostles, the hanger-on of the Imperial Court, with Roman vices

veneered on his native wickedness, was not the man to welcome the entrance of a revolutionary ferment into his household; and yet through his barred doors had crept quietly, he knowing nothing about it, that great message of a loving God, and a Master whose service was freedom. And in thousands of like cases the Gospel was finding its way underground, undreamed of by the great and wise, but steadily pressing onwards, and undermining all the towering grandeur that was so contemptuous of it. So Christ's truth spread at first; and I believe that is the way it always spreads. Intellectual revolutions begin at the top and filter down; religious revolutions begin at the bottom and rise; and it is always the 'lower orders' that are laid hold of first. 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called,' but a handful of slaves in Aristobulus' household, with this living truth lodged in their hearts, were the bearers and the witnesses and the organs of the power which was going to shatter all that towered above it and despised it. And so it always is.

Do not let us be ashamed of a Gospel that has not laid hold of the upper and the educated classes, but let us feel sure of this, that there is no greater sign of defective education and of superficial culture and of inborn vulgarity than despising the day of small things, and estimating truth by the position or the intellectual attainments of the men that are its witnesses and

its lovers. The Gospel penetrated at first, and penetrates still, in the fashion that is suggested here.

II. Secondly, these two households teach us very touchingly and beautifully the uniting power of Christian sympathy.

A considerable proportion of the first of these two households would probably be Jews—if Aristobulus were indeed Herod's grandson. The probability that he was is increased by the greeting interposed between those to the two households—‘Salute Herodion.’ The name suggests some connection with Herod, and whether we suppose the designation of ‘my kinsman,’ which Paul gives him, to mean ‘blood relation’ or ‘fellow countryman,’ Herodion, at all events, was a Jew by birth. As to the other members of these households, Paul may have met some of them in his many travels, but he had never been in Rome, and his greetings are more probably sent to them as conspicuous sections, numerically, of the Roman Church, and as tokens of his affection, though he had never seen them. The possession of a common faith has bridged the gulf between him and them. Slaves in those days were outside the pale of human sympathy, and almost outside the pale of human rights. And here the foremost of Christian teachers, who was a freeman born, separated from these poor people by a tremendous chasm, stretches a brother's hand across it and grasps theirs. The Gospel that came

into the world to rend old associations and to split up society, and to make a deep cleft between fathers and children and husband and wife, came also to more than counterbalance its dividing effects by its uniting power. And in that old world that was separated into classes by gulfs deeper than any of which we have any experience, it, and it alone, threw a bridge across the abysses and bound men together. Think of what a revolution it must have been, when a master and his slave could sit down together at the table of the Lord and look each other in the face and say 'Brother' and for the moment forget the difference of bond and free. Think of what a revolution it must have been when Jew and Gentile could sit down together at the table of the Lord, and forget circumcision and uncircumcision, and feel that they were all one in Jesus Christ. And as for the third of the great clefts—that, alas! which made so much of the tragedy and the wickedness of ancient life—viz. the separation between the sexes—think of what a revolution it was when men and women, in all purity of the new bond of Christian affection, could sit down together at the same table, and feel that they were brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ.

The uniting power of the common faith and the common love to the one Lord marked Christianity as altogether supernatural and new, unique in the world's experience, and obviously requiring something more than a human force to produce it. Will anybody say that the

Christianity of this day has preserved and exhibits that primitive demonstration of its superhuman source? Is there anything obviously beyond the power of earthly motives in the unselfish, expansive love of modern Christians? Alas! alas! to ask the question is to answer it, and everybody knows the answer, and nobody sorrows over it. Is any duty more pressingly laid upon Christian churches of this generation than that, forgetting their doctrinal janglings for a while, and putting away their sectarianisms and narrowness, they should show the world that their faith has still the power to do what it did in the old times, bridge over the gulf that separates class from class, and bring all men together in the unity of the faith and of the love of Jesus Christ? Depend upon it, unless the modern organisations of Christianity which call themselves 'churches' show themselves, in the next twenty years, a great deal more alive to the necessity, and a great deal more able to cope with the problem, of uniting the classes of our modern complex civilisation, the term of life of these churches is comparatively brief. And the form of Christianity which another century will see will be one which reproduces the old miracle of the early days, and reaches across the deepest clefts that separate modern society, and makes all one in Jesus Christ. It is all very well for us to glorify the ancient love of the early Christians, but there is a vast deal of false sentimentality about our eulogistic talk of it. It were better to praise it less and imitate it more. Translate it

into present life, and you will find that to-day it requires what it nineteen hundred years ago was recognised as manifesting, the presence of something more than human motive, and something more than man discovers of truth. The cement must be divine that binds men thus together.

Again, these two households suggest for us the tranquillising power of Christian resignation.

They were mostly slaves, and they continued to be slaves when they were Christians. Paul recognised their continuance in the servile position, and did not say a word to them to induce them to break their bonds. The Epistle to the Corinthians treats the whole subject of slavery in a very remarkable fashion. It says to the slave: ‘If you were a slave when you became a Christian, stop where you are. If you have an opportunity of being free, avail yourself of it; if you have not, never mind.’ And then it adds this great principle: ‘He that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is Christ's freeman. Likewise he that is called, being free, is Christ's slave.’ The Apostle applies the very same principle, in the adjoining verses, to the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision. From all which there comes just the same lesson that is taught us by these two households of slaves left intact by Christianity—viz. that where a man is conscious of a direct, individual relation to Jesus Christ, that makes all outward circumstances infinitely insignificant. Let us get up to the

height, and they all become very small. Of course, the principles of Christianity killed slavery, but it took eighteen hundred years to do it. Of course, there is no blinking the fact that slavery was an essentially immoral and unchristian institution. But it is one thing to lay down principles and leave them to be worked in and then to be worked out, and it is another thing to go blindly charging at existing institutions and throwing them down by violence, before men have grown up to feel that they are wicked. And so the New Testament takes the wise course, and leaves the foolish one to foolish people. It makes the tree good, and then its fruit will be good.

But the main point that I want to insist upon is this: what was good for these slaves in Rome is good for you and me. Let us get near to Jesus Christ, and feel that we have got hold of His hand for our own selves, and we shall not mind very much about the possible varieties of human condition. Rich or poor, happy or sad, surrounded by companions or treading a solitary path, failures or successes as the world has it, strong or broken and weak and wearied—all these varieties, important as they are, come to be very small when we can say, ‘We are the Lord's.’ That amulet makes all things tolerable; and the Christian submission which is the expression of our love to, and confidence in, His infinite sweetness and unerring goodness, raises us to a height from which the varieties of earthly condition seem to blend and melt into one.

When we are down amongst the low hills, it seems a long way from the foot of one of them to the top of it; but when we are on the top they all melt into one dead level, and you cannot tell which is top and which is bottom. And so, if we only can rise high enough up the hill, the possible diversities of our condition will seem to be very small variations in the level.

III. Lastly, these two groups suggest to us the conquering power of Christian faithfulness.

The household of Herod's grandson was not a very likely place to find Christian people in, was it? Such flowers do not often grow, or at least do not easily grow, on such dunghills. And in both these cases it was only a handful of the people, a portion of each household, that was Christian. So they had beside them, closely identified with them—working, perhaps, at the same tasks, I might almost say, chained with the same chains —men who had no share in their faith or in their love. It would not be easy to pray and love and trust God and do His will, and keep clear of complicity with idolatry and immorality and sin, in such a pigsty as that; would it? But these men did it. And nobody need ever say, ‘I am in such circumstances that I cannot live a Christian life.’ There are no such circumstances, at least none of God's appointing. There are often such that we bring upon ourselves, and then the best thing is to get out of them as soon as we can. But as far as He is concerned, He never puts anybody anywhere where he cannot live a holy life.

There were no difficulties too great for these men to overcome; there are no difficulties too great for us to overcome. And wherever you and I may be, we cannot be in any place where it is so hard to live a consistent life as these people were. Young men in warehouses, people in business here in Manchester, some of us with unfortunate domestic or relative associations, and so on—we may all feel as if it would be so much easier for us if this, that, and the other thing were changed. No, it would not be any easier; and perhaps the harder the easier, because the more obviously the atmosphere is poisonous, the more we shall put some cloth over our mouths to prevent it from getting into our lungs. The dangerous place is the place where the vapours that poison are scentless as well as invisible. But whatever be the difficulties, there is strength waiting for us, and we may all win the praise which the Apostle gives to another of these Roman brethren, whom he salutes as ‘Apelles, approved in Christ’—a man that had been ‘tried’ and had stood his trial. So in our various spheres of difficulty and of temptation we may feel that the greeting from heaven, like Paul's message to the slaves in Rome, comes to us with good cheer, and that the Master Himself sees us, sympathises with us, salutes us, and stretches out His hand to help and to keep us.

TRYPHENA AND TRYPHOSA

> 'Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord.'—ROMANS xvi. 12.

The number of salutations to members of the Roman Church is remarkable when we take into account that Paul had never visited it. The capital drew all sorts of people to it, and probably there had been personal intercourse between most of the persons here mentioned and the Apostle in some part of his wandering life. He not only displays his intimate knowledge of the persons saluted, but his beautiful delicacy and ingenuity in the varying epithets applied to them shows how in his great heart and tenacious memory individuals had a place. These shadowy saints live for ever by Paul's brief characterisation of them, and stand out to us almost as clearly and as sharply distinguished as they did to him.

These two, Tryphena and Tryphosa, were probably sisters. That is rendered likely by their being coupled together here, as well as by the similarity of their names. These names mean luxurious, or delicate, and no doubt expressed the ideal for their daughters which the parents had had, and possibly indicate the kind of life from which these two women had come. We can scarcely fail to note the contrast between the meaning of their names and the Christian lives they had lived. Two dainty women, probably

belonging to a class in which a delicate withdrawal from effort and toil was thought to be the woman's distinctive mark, had fled from luxury, which often tended to be voluptuous, and was always self-indulgent, and had chosen the better part of ‘labour in the Lord.’ They had become untrue to their names, because they must be true to their Master and themselves. We may well take the lesson that lies here, and is eminently needful to-day amidst the senseless, and often sinful, tide of luxury which runs so strongly as to threaten the great and eternal Christian principle of self-denial.

The first thing that strikes us in looking at these salutations is the illustration which it gives of the uniting power of a common faith. Tryphena and Tryphosa were probably Roman ladies of some social standing, and their names may indicate that they at least inherited a tendency to exclusiveness; yet here they occur immediately after the household of Narcissus and in close connection with that of Aristobulus, both of which are groups of slaves. Aristobulus was a grandson of Herod the Great, and Narcissus was a well-known freedman, whose slaves at his death would probably become the property of the Emperor. Other common slave names are those of Ampliatus and Urbanus; and here in these lists they stand side by side with persons of some distinction in the Roman world, and with men and women of widely differing nationalities. The Church of Rome would have seemed to any non-Christian observer a motley

crowd in which racial distinctions, sex, and social conditions had all been swept away by the rising tide of a common fanaticism. In it was exemplified in actual operation Paul's great principle that in Christ Jesus ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free, but in Him all are one.’ Roman society in that day, as Juvenal shows us, was familiar with the levelling and uniting power of common vice and immorality, and the few sternly patriotic Romans who were left lamented that ‘the Orontes flowed into the Tiber’; but such common wallowing in filth led to no real unity, whereas, in the obscure corner of the great city where there were members of the infant Church gathered together, there was the beginning of a common life in the one Lord which lifted each participant of it out of the dreary solitude of individuality, and imparted to each heart the tingling consciousness of oneness with all who held the one faith in the one Lord and had received the one baptism in the one Name. That fair dawn has been shadowed by many clouds, and the churches of to-day, however they may have developed doctrine, may look back with reproach and shame to the example of Rome, where Tryphena and Tryphosa, with all their inherited, fastidious delicacy, recognised in the household of Aristobulus and the household of Narcissus ‘brethren in the Lord,’ and were as glad to welcome Jews, Asiatics, Persians, and Greeks, as Romans of the bluest blood, into the family of Christ. The Romish Church of our day

has lost its early grace of welcoming all who love the one Lord into its fellowship; and we of the Protestant churches have been but too swift to learn the bad lesson of forbidding all who follow not with us.

Another thought which may be suggested by Tryphena and Tryphosa is the blessed hallowing of natural family relations by common faith. They were probably sisters, or, at all events, as their names indicate, near relatives, and to them that faith must have been doubly precious because they shared it with each other. None of the trials to which the early Christians were exposed was more severe than the necessity which their Christianity so often imposed upon them of breaking the sacred family ties. It saddened even Christ's heart to think that He had come to rend families in sunder, and to make ‘a man's foes them of his own household’; and we can little imagine how bitter the pang must have been when family love had to be cast aside at the bidding of allegiance to Him.

But though the stress of that separation between those most nearly related in blood by reason of unshared faith is alleviated in this day, it still remains; and that is but a feeble Christian life which does not feel that it is drawing a heart from closest human embraces and constituting a barrier between it and the dearest of earth. There is still need in these days of relaxed Christian sentiment for the stern austerity of the law, ‘He that loveth father or mother more than

Me is not worthy of Me'; and there are many Christian souls who would be infinitely stronger and more mature, if they did not yield to the seductions of family affections which are not rooted in Jesus Christ. But still, though our faith ought to be far more than it often is, the determining element in our affections and associations, its noblest work is not to separate but to unite; and whilst it often must divide, it is meant to draw more closely together hearts that are already knit by earthly love. Its legitimate effect is to make all earthly sweetnesses sweeter, all holy bonds more holy and more binding, to infuse a new constraint and preciousness into all earthly relationships, to make brothers tenfold more brotherly and sisters more sisterly. The heart, in which the deepest devotion is yielded to Jesus Christ, has its capacity for devotion infinitely increased, and they who, looking into each other's faces, see reflected there something of the Lord whom they both love, love each other all the more because they love Him most, and in their love to Him, and His to them, have found a new measure for all their affection. They who, looking on their dear ones, can 'trust they live in God,' will there find them 'worthier to be loved,' and will there find a power of loving them. Tryphena and Tryphosa were more sisterly than ever when they clung to their Elder Brother. 'There is no man that hath left brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, for My sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold more in this time, brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and in the

world to come eternal life.'

The contrast between the names of these two Roman ladies and the characterisation of their 'labour in the Lord' may suggest to us the most formidable foe of Christian earnestness. Their names, as we have already noticed, point to a state of society in which the parents ideal for their daughters was dainty luxuriousness and a withdrawal from the rough and tumble of common life; but these two women, magnetised by the love of Jesus, had turned their backs on the parental ideal, and had cast themselves earnestly into a life of toil. That ideal was never more formidably antagonistic to the vigour of Christian life than it is to-day. Rome, in Paul's time, was not more completely honeycombed with worldliness than England is to-day; and the English churches are not far behind the English 'world' in their paralysing love of luxury and self-indulgence. In all ages, earnest Christians have had to take up the same vehement remonstrance against the tendency of the average Christian to let his religious life be weakened by the love of the world and the things of the world. The protests against growing luxury have been a commonplace in all ages of the Church; but, surely, there has never been a time when it has reached a more senseless, sinful, and destroying height than in our day. The rapid growth of wealth, with no capacity of using it nobly, which modern commerce has brought, has immensely influenced all our churches for evil. It is so hard

for us, aggregated in great cities, to live our own lives, and the example of our class has such immense power over us that it is very hard to pursue the path of 'plain living and high thinking' in communities, all classes of which are more and more yielding to the temptation to ostentation, so-called comfort, and extravagant expenditure; and that this is a danger—we are tempted to say *the* danger—to the purity, loftiness, and vigour of religious life among us, he must be blind who cannot see, and he must be strangely ignorant of his own life who cannot feel that it is the danger for him. I believe that for one professing Christian whose earnestness is lost by reason of intellectual doubts, or by some grave sin, there are a hundred from whom it simply oozes away unnoticed, like wind out of a bladder, so that what was once round and full becomes limp and flaccid. If Demas begins with loving the present world, it will not be long before he finds a reason for departing from Paul.

We may take these two sisters, finally, as pointing for us the true victory over this formidable enemy. They had turned resolutely away from the heathen ideal enshrined in their names to a life of real hard toil, as is distinctly implied by the word used by the Apostle. What that toil consisted in we do not know, and need not inquire; but the main point to be noted is that their 'labour' was 'in the Lord.' That union with Christ makes labour for Him a necessity, and makes it possible. 'The labour we delight in physics pain'; and if we are in Him, we shall not

only ‘live in Him,’ but all our work begun, continued, and ended in Him, will in Him and by Him be accepted. There is no victorious antagonist of worldly ease and self-indulgence comparable to the living consciousness of union with Jesus and His life in us. To dwell in the swamps at the bottom of the mountain is to live in a region where effort is impossible and malaria weakens vitality; to climb the heights brings bracing to the limbs and a purer air into the expanding lungs, and makes work delightsome that would have been labour down below. If we are ‘in the Lord,’ He is our atmosphere, and we can draw from Him full draughts of a noble life in which we shall not need the stimulus of self-interest or worldly success to use it to the utmost in acts of service to Him. They who live in the Lord will labour in the Lord, and they who labour in the Lord will rest in the Lord.

PERSIS

> ‘Salute the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord.’—
> ROMANS xvi. 12.

There are a great number of otherwise unknown Christians who pass for a moment before our view in this chapter. Their characterisations are like the slight outlines in the background of some great artist's canvas: a

touch of the brush is all that is spared for each, and yet, if we like to look sympathetically, they live before us. Now, this good woman, about whom we never hear again, and for whom these few words are all her epitaph—was apparently, judging by her name, of Persian descent, and possibly had been brought to Rome as a slave. At all events, finding herself there, she had somehow or other become connected with the Church in that city, and had there distinguished herself by continuous and faithful Christian toil which had won the affection of the Apostle, though he had never seen her, and knew no more about her. That is all. She comes into the foreground for a moment, and then she vanishes. What does she say to us?

First of all, like the others named by Paul, she helps us to understand, by her living example, that wonderful, new, uniting process that was carried on by means of Christianity. The simple fact of a Persian woman getting a loving message from a Jew, the woman being in Rome and the Jew in Corinth, and the message being written in Greek, brings before us a whole group of nationalities all fused together. They had been hammered together, or, if you like it better, chained together, by Roman power, but they were melted together by Christ's Gospel. This Eastern woman and this Jewish man, and the many others whose names and different nationalities pass in a flash before us in this chapter, were all brought together in Jesus Christ.

If we run our eye over these salutations, what strikes one, even at the first sight, is the very small number of Jewish names; only one certain, and another doubtful. Four or five names are Latin, and then all the rest are Greek, but this woman seemingly came from further east than any of them. There they all were, forgetting the hostile nationalities to which they belonged, because they had found One who had brought them into one great community. We talk about the uniting influence of Christianity, but when we see the process going on before us, in a case like this, we begin to understand it better.

But another point may be noticed in regard to this uniting process—how it brought into action the purest and truest love as a bond that linked men. There are four or five of the people commended in this chapter of whom the Apostle has nothing to say but that they are beloved. This is the only woman to whom he applies that term. And notice his instinctive delicacy: when he is speaking of men he says, '*My* beloved'; when he is greeting Persis he says, '*the* beloved,' that there may be no misunderstanding about the 'my'—'the beloved Persis which laboured much in the Lord'—indicating, by one delicate touch, the loftiness, the purity, and truly Christian character of the bond that held them together. And that is no true Church, where anything but that is the bond—the love that knits us to one another, because we believe that each is knit to the dear Lord and fountain of all love.

What more does this good woman say to us? She is an example living and breathing there before us, of what a woman may be in God's Church. Paul had never been in Rome; no Apostle, so far as we know, had had anything to do with the founding of the Church. The most important Church in the Roman Empire, and the Church which afterwards became the curse of Christendom, was founded by some anonymous Christians, with no commission, with no supervision, with no officials amongst them, but who just had the grace of God in their hearts, and found themselves in Rome, and could not help speaking about Jesus Christ. God helped them, and a little Church sprang into being. And the great abundance of salutations here, and the honourable titles which the Apostle gives to the Christians of whom he speaks, and many of whom he signalises as having done great service, are a kind of certificate on his part to the vigorous life which, without any apostolic supervision or official direction, had developed itself there in that Church.

Now, it is to be noticed that this striking form of eulogium which is attached to our Persis she shares in common with others in the group. And it is to be further noticed that all those who are, as it were, decorated with this medal—on whom Paul bestows this honour of saying that they had ‘laboured,’ or ‘laboured much in the Lord,’ are women that stand alone in the list. There are several other women in it, but they are all coupled with men—husbands or brothers, or

some kind of relative. But there are three sets of women, I do not say single women, but three sets of women, standing singly in the list, and it is about them, and them only, that Paul says they 'laboured,' or 'laboured much.' There is a Mary who stands alone, and she 'bestowed much labour on' Paul and others. Then there are, in the same verse as my text, two sisters, Tryphena and Tryphosa, whose names mean 'the luxurious.' And the Apostle seems to think, as he writes the two names that spoke of self-indulgence: 'Perhaps these rightly described these two women once, but they do not now. In the bad old days, before they were Christians, they may have been rightly named luxurious-living. But here is their name now, the luxurious is turned into the self-sacrificing worker, and the two sisters "labour in the Lord."' Then comes our friend Persis, who also stands alone, and she shares in the honour that only these other two companies of women share with her. She 'laboured much in the Lord.' In that little community, without any direction from Apostles and authorised teachers, the brethren and sisters had every one found their tasks; and these solitary women, with nobody to say to them, 'Go and do this or that,' had found out for themselves, or rather had been taught by the Spirit of Jesus, what they had to do, and they worked at it with a will. There are many things that Christian women can do a great deal better than men, and we are not to forget that this modern talk about the emancipation of women

has its roots here in the New Testament. We are not to forget either that prerogative means obligation, and that the elevation of woman means the laying upon her of solemn duties to perform. I wonder how many of the women members of our Churches and congregations deserve such a designation as that? We hear a great deal about ‘women's rights’ nowadays. I wish some of my friends would lay a little more to heart than they do, ‘women's duties.’

And now, lastly, the final lesson that I draw from this eulogium of an otherwise altogether unknown woman is that she is a model of Christian service.

First, in regard to its measure. She ‘laboured much in the Lord.’ Now, both these two words, ‘laboured’ and ‘much,’ are extremely emphatic. The word rightly translated ‘laboured’ will appear in its full force if I recall to you a couple of other places in which it is employed in the New Testament. You remember that touching incident about our Lord when, being ‘*wearied* with His journey, He sat thus on the well.’ ‘Wearied’ is the same word as is here used. Then, you remember how the Apostle, after he had been hauling empty nets all night in the little, wet, dirty fishing-boat, said, perhaps with a yawn, ‘Master, we have *toiled* all the night and caught nothing.’ He uses the same word as is employed here. Such is the sort of work that these women had done—work carried to the point of exhaustion, work up to the very edge of

their powers, work unsparing and continuous, and not done once in some flash of evanescent enthusiasm, but all through a dreary night, in spite of apparent failures.

There is the measure of service. Many of us seem to think that if we say 'I am tired,' that is a reason for not doing anything. Sometimes it is, no doubt; and no man has a right so to labour as to impair his capacity for future labour, but subject to that condition I do not know that the plea of fatigue is a sufficient reason for idleness. And I am quite sure that the true example for us is the example of Him who, when He was most wearied, sitting on the well, was so invigorated and refreshed by the opportunity of winning another soul that, when His disciples came back to Him, they looked at His fresh strength with astonishment, and said to themselves, 'Has any man brought Him anything to eat?' Ay, what He had to eat was work that He finished for the Father, and some of us know that the truest refreshment in toil is a change of toil. It is almost as good to shift the load on to the other shoulder, or to take a stick into the other hand, as it is to put away the load altogether. Oh, the careful limits which Christian people nowadays set to their work for Jesus! They are not afraid of being tired in their pursuit of business or pleasure, but in regard to Christ's work they will let anything go to wrack and ruin rather than that they should turn a hair, by persevering efforts to prevent it. Work to the limit of power if you live in the light of blessedness.

She ‘laboured much in the Lord,’ or, as Jesus Christ said about the other woman who was blamed by the people that did not love enough to understand the blessedness of self-sacrifice, ‘she had done what she could.’ It was an apology for the form of Mary's service, but it was a stringent demand as to its amount. ‘What she could’—not *half* of what she could; not what she *conveniently* could. That is the measure of acceptable service.

Then, still further, may we not learn from Persis the spring of all true Christian work? She ‘laboured much in the Lord,’ because she *was* ‘in Him,’ and in union with Him there came to her power and desire to do things which, without that close fellowship, she neither would have desired nor been able to do. It is vain to try to whip up Christian people to forms of service by appealing to lower motives. There is only one motive that will last, and bring out from us all that is in us to do, and that is the appeal to our sense of union and communion with Jesus Christ, and the exhortation to live in Him, and then we shall work in Him. If you link the spindles in your mill, or the looms in your weaving-shed, with the engine, they will go. It is of no use to try to turn them by hand. You will only spoil the machinery, and it will be poor work that you will get off them.

So, dear brethren, be ‘in the Lord.’ That is the secret of service, and the closer we come to Him, and the more continuously, moment by moment,

we realise our individual dependence upon Him, and our union with Him, the more will our lives effloresce and blossom into all manner of excellence and joyful service, and nothing else that Christian people are whipped up to do, from lower and more vulgar motives than that, will. It may be of a certain kind of inferior value, but it is far beneath the highest beauty of Christian service, nor will its issues reach the loftiest point of usefulness to which even our poor service may attain.

Persis seems to me to suggest, too, the safeguard of work. Ah, if she had not 'laboured in the Lord,' and been 'in the Lord' whilst she was labouring, she would very soon have stopped work. Our Christian work, however pure its motive when we begin it, has in itself the tendency to become mechanical, and to be done from lower motives than those from which it was begun. That is true about a man in my position. It is true about all of us, in our several ways of trying to serve our dear Lord and Master. Unless we make a conscience of continually renewing our communion with Him, and getting our feet once more firmly upon the rock, we shall certainly in our Christian work, having begun in the spirit, continue in the flesh, and before we know where we are, we shall be doing work from habit, because we did it yesterday at this hour, because people expect it of us, because A, B, or C does it, or for a hundred other reasons, all of which are but too familiar to us by experience. They are sure to

slip in; they change the whole character of the work, and they harm the workers. The only way by which we can keep the garland fresh is by continually dipping it in the fountain. The only way by which we can keep our Christian work pure, useful, worthy of the Master, is by seeing to it that our work itself does not draw us away from our fellowship with Him. And the more we have to do, the more needful is it that we should listen to Christ's voice when He says to us, 'Come ye yourselves apart with Me into a solitary place, and there renew your communion with Me.'

The last lesson about our work which I draw from Persis is the unexpected immortality of true Christian service. How Persis would have opened her eyes if anybody had told her that nearly 1900 years after she lived, people in a far-away barbarous island would be sitting thinking about her, as you and I are doing now! How astonished she would have been if it had been said to her, 'Now, Persis, wheresoever in the whole world the Gospel is preached, your name and your work and your epitaph will go with it, and as long as men know about Jesus Christ, your and their Master, they will know about you, His humble servant.' Well, we shall not have our names in that fashion in men's memories, but Jesus will have your name and mine, if we do His work as this woman did it, in *His* memory. 'I will never forget any of their works.' And if we—self-forgetful to the limit of our power, and as the joyful result of our

personal union with that Saviour who has done everything for us—try to live for His praise and glory in any fashion, then be sure of this, that our poor deeds are as immortal as Him for whom they are done, and that we may take to ourselves the great word which He has spoken, when He has declared that at the last He will confess His confessors' names before the angels in heaven. Blessed are the living that 'live in the Lord'; blessed are the workers that work 'in the Lord,' for when they come to be the dead that 'die in the Lord' and rest from their labours, their works shall follow them.

A CRUSHED SNAKE

> 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.'—ROMANS xvi. 20.

There are three other Scriptural sayings which may have been floating in the Apostle's mind when he penned this triumphant assurance. 'Thou shalt bruise his head'; the great first Evangel—we are to be endowed with Christ's power; 'The lion and the adder thou shalt trample under foot'—all the strength that was given to ancient saints is ours; 'Behold! I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy'—the charter of the seventy is the perennial gift to the Church. Echoing all these great words, Paul

promises the Roman Christians that ‘the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.’ Now, when any special characteristic is thus ascribed to God, as when He is called ‘the God of patience’ or ‘the God of hope,’ in the preceding chapter, the characteristic selected has some bearing on the prayer or promise following. For example, this same designation, ‘the God of peace,’ united with the other, ‘that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,’ is laid as the foundation of the prayer for the perfecting of the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews in every good work. It is, then, because of that great name that the Apostle is sure, and would have his Roman brethren to be sure, that Satan shall shortly be bruised under their feet. No doubt there may have been some reference in Paul's mind to what he had just said about those who caused divisions in the Church; but, if there is such reference, it is of secondary importance. Paul is gazing on all the great things in God which make Him the God of peace, and in them all he sees ground for the confident hope that His power will be exerted to crush all the sin that breaks His children's peace.

Now the first thought suggested by these words is the solemn glimpse given of the struggle that goes on in every Christian soul.

Two antagonists are at hand-grips in every one of us. On the one hand, the ‘God of peace,’ on the other, ‘Satan.’ If you believe in the

personality of the One, do not part with the belief in the personality of the other. If you believe that a divine power and Spirit is ready to help and strengthen you, do not think so lightly of the enemies that are arrayed against you as to falter in the belief that there *is* a great personal Power, rooted in evil, who is warring against each of us. Ah, brethren! we live far too much on the surface, and we neither go down deep enough to the dark source of the Evil, nor rise high enough to the radiant Fountain of the Good. It is a shallow life that strikes that antagonism of God and Satan out of itself. And though the belief in a personal tempter has got to be very unfashionable nowadays, I am going to venture to say that you may measure accurately the vitality and depth of a man's religion by the emphasis with which he grasps the thought of that great antagonism. There is a star of light, and there is a star of darkness; and they revolve, as it were, round one centre.

But whilst, on the one hand, our Christianity is made shallow in proportion as we ignore this solemn reality, on the other hand, it is sometimes paralysed and perverted by our misunderstanding of it. For, notice, 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan *under your feet*.' Yes, it is God that bruises, but He uses our feet to do it. It is God from whom the power comes, but the power works through us, and we are neither merely the field, nor merely the prize, of the conflict between these two, but we ourselves have to put all our pith into the task of keeping

down the flat, speckled head that has the poison gland in it. 'The God of peace'—blessed be His Name—'shall bruise Satan under your feet,' but it will need the tension of your muscles, and the downward force of your heel, if the wriggling reptile is to be kept under.

Turn, now, to the other thought that is here, the promise and pledge of victory in the name, the God of peace. I have already referred to two similar designations of God in the previous chapter, and if we take them in union with this one in our text, what a wonderfully beautiful and strengthening threefold view of that divine nature do we get! 'The God of patience and consolation' is the first of the linked three. It heads the list, and blessed is it that it does, because, after all, sorrow makes up a very large proportion of the experience of us all, and what most men seem to themselves to need most is a God that will bear their sorrows with them and help them to bear, and a God that will comfort them. But, supposing that He has been made known thus as the source of endurance and the God of all consolation, He becomes 'the God of hope,' for a dark background flings up a light foreground, and a comforted sorrow patiently endured is mighty to produce a radiant hope. The rising of the muddy waters of the Nile makes the heavy crops of 'corn in Egypt.' So the name 'the God of hope' fitly follows the name 'the God of patience and consolation.'

Then we come to the name in my text, built

perhaps on the other two, or at least reminiscent of them, and recalling them, ‘the God of peace,’ who, through patience and consolation, through hope, and through many another gift, breathes the benediction of His own great tranquillity and unruffled calm over our agitated, distracted, sinful hearts. In connection with one of those previous designations to which I have referred, the Apostle has a prayer very different in form from this, but identical in substance, when he says ‘the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.’ Is not that closely allied to the promise of my text, ‘The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly’? Is there any surer way of ‘bruising Satan’ under a man's feet than filling him ‘with joy and peace in believing’? What can the Devil do to that man? If his soul is saturated, and his capacities filled, with that pure honey of divine joy, will he have any taste for the coarse dainties, the leeks and the garlic, that the Devil offers him? Is there any surer way of delivering a man from the temptations of his own baser nature, and the solicitations of this busy intrusive world round about him, than to make him satisfied with the goodness of the Lord, and conscious in his daily experience of ‘all joy and peace’? Fill the vessel with wine, and there is no room for baser liquors or for poison. I suppose that the way by which you and I, dear friends, will most effectually conquer any temptations, is by falling back on the superior sweetness of divine joys. When we live upon manna we do not crave onions. So He

‘will bruise Satan under your feet’ by giving that which will arm your hearts against all his temptations and all his weapons. Blessed be God for the way of conquest, which is the possession of a supremer good!

But then, notice how beautifully too this name, ‘the God of peace,’ comes in to suggest that even in the strife there may be tranquillity. I remember in an old church in Italy a painting of an Archangel with his foot on the dragon's neck, and his sword thrust through its scaly armour. It is perhaps the feebleness of the artist's hand, but I think rather it is the clearness of his insight, which has led him to represent the victorious angel, in the moment in which he is slaying the dragon, as with a smile on his face, and not the least trace of effort in the arm, which is so easily smiting the fatal blow. Perhaps if the painter could have used his brush better he would have put more expression into the attitude and the face, but I think it is better as it is. We, too, may achieve a conquest over the dragon which, although it requires effort, does not disturb peace. There is a possibility of bruising that slippery head under my foot, and yet not having to strain myself in the process. We may have ‘peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation.’ Do you remember how the Apostle, in another place, gives us the same beautiful—though at first sight contradictory—combination when he says, ‘The peace of God shall garrison your heart’?

'My soul! there is a country
  Far, far beyond the stars,
Where stands an armed sentry,
  All skilful in the wars.'

And her name is Peace, as the poet goes on to tell us. Ah, brethren! if we lived nearer the Lord, we should find it more possible to 'fight the good fight of faith,' and yet to have 'our feet shod with the preparedness of the gospel of peace.'

'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet'; and in bruising He will give you His peace to do it, and His peace in doing it, and in still greater measure after doing it. For every struggle of the Christian soul adds something to the subsequent depth of its tranquillity. And so the name of the God of peace is our pledge of victory in, and of deepened peace after, our warfare with sin and temptation.

Lastly, note the swiftness with which Paul expects that this process shall he accomplished.

I dare say that he was thinking about the coming of the Lord, when all the fighting and struggle would be over, and that when he said 'God shall bruise him under your feet shortly,' there lay in the back of his mind the thought, 'the Lord is at hand.' But be that as it may, there is another way of looking at the words. They are not in the least like our experience, are they? 'Shortly!'—and here am I, a Christian man for the last half century perhaps; and have I got

much further on in my course? Have I brought the sin that used to trouble me much down, and is my character much more noble, Christ-like, than it was long years ago? Would other people say that it is? Instead of ‘shortly’ we ought to put ‘slowly’ for the most of us. But, dear friend, the ideal is swift conquest, and it is our fault and our loss, if the reality is sadly different.

There are a great many evils that, unless they are conquered suddenly, have very small chance of ever being conquered at all. You never heard of a man being cured of his love of intoxicating drink, for instance, by a gradual process. The serpent's life is not crushed out of it by gradual pressure, but by one vigorous stamp of a nervous heel.

But if my experience as a Christian man does not enable me to set to my seal that this text is true, the text itself will tell me why. It is ‘the God of peace’ that is going to ‘bruise Satan.’ Do you keep yourself in touch with Him, dear friend? And do you let His powers come uninterruptedly and continuously into your spirit and life? It is sheer folly and self-delusion to wonder that the medicine does not work as quickly as was promised, if you do not take the medicine. The slow process by which, at the best, many Christian people ‘bruise Satan under their feet,’ during which he hurts their heels more than they hurt his head, is mainly due to their breaking the closeness and the continuity of their communion with God in Jesus Christ.

But, after all, it is Heaven's chronology that we have to do with here. ‘Shortly,’ and it will be ‘shortly,’ if we reckon by heavenly scales of duration. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. ‘The Lord will help her, and that right early.’ ‘The Lord is at hand.’ When we get yonder, ah! how all the long years of fighting will have dwindled down, and we shall say ‘the Lord did help me, and that right early,’ and though there may have been more than threescore years and ten of fighting, that, while we were in the thick of it, did not seem to come to much, we shall then look back and say: ‘Yes, Lord, it was but for a moment, and it has brought me to the undying day of Eternal Peace.’

TERTIUS

> ‘I, Tertius, who write the epistle,
> salute you in the Lord.’—ROMANS
> xvi. 22 (R. V.).

One sometimes sees in old religious pictures, in some obscure corner, a tiny kneeling figure, the portrait of the artist. So Tertius here gets leave to hold the pen for a moment on his own account, and from Corinth sends his greeting to his unknown brethren in Rome. Apparently he was a stranger to them, and needed to introduce himself. He is never heard of before or since. For one brief moment he is visible, like a star of a

low magnitude, shining out for a moment between two banks of darkness and then swallowed up. Judging by his name, he was probably a Roman, and possibly had some connection with Italy, but clearly was a stranger to the Church in Rome. We do not know whether he was a resident in Corinth, where he wrote this epistle, or one of Paul's travelling companions. Probably he was the former, as his name never recurs in any of Paul's letters. One can understand the impulse which led him for one moment to come out of obscurity and to take up personal relations with those who had so long enjoyed his pen. He would fain float across the deep gulf of alienation a thread of love which looked like gossamer, but has proved to be stronger than centuries and revolutions.

This humble and modest greeting is an expression of a sentiment which the world may smile at, but which, being ‘in the Lord,’ partakes of immortality. No doubt the world's hate drove more closely together all the disciples in primitive times; but the yearning of Tertius for some little corner in the love of his Roman brethren might well influence us to-day. There ought to be an effort of imagination going out towards unknown brethren. Christian love is not meant to be kept within the limits of sight and personal knowledge; it should overleap the narrow bounds of the communities to which we belong, and expatiate over the whole wide field. The great Shepherd has prescribed for us the limits to the very edge of which our Christian

love should consciously go forth, and has rebuked the narrowness to which we are prone, when He has said, ‘Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.’ We are all too prone to let identities of opinion and of polity, or even the accident of locality, set bounds to our consciousness of brotherhood; and the example of this little gush of affection, that reaches out a hand across the ocean and grasps the hands of unknown partakers in the common life of the one Lord, may well shame us out of our narrowness, and quicken us into a wide perception and deepened feeling towards all who in every place call up Jesus Christ as their Lord—‘both their Lord and ours.’

Another lesson which we may learn from Tertius’ characterisation of himself is the dignity of subordinate work towards a great end. His office as amanuensis was very humble, but it was quite as necessary as Paul's inspired fervour. It is to him that we owe our possession of the Epistle; it is to him that Paul owed it that he was able to record in imperishable words the thoughts that welled up in his mind, and would have been lost if Tertius had not been at his side. The power generated in the boilers does its work through machines of which each little cog-wheel is as indispensable as the great shafts. Members of the body which seem to be ‘more feeble, are necessary.’ Every note in a great concerted piece of music, and every instrument, down to the triangle and the little drum in the great orchestra, is necessary. This lesson of the dignity

of subordinate work needs to be laid to heart both by those who think themselves to be capable of more important service, and by those who have to recognise that the less honourable tasks are all for which they are fit. To the former it may preach humility, the latter it may encourage. We are all very ignorant of what is great and what is small in the matter of our Christian service, and we have sometimes to look very closely and to clear away a great many vulgar misconceptions before we can clearly discriminate between mites and talents. 'We know not which may prosper, whether this or that'; and in our ignorance of what it may please God to bring out of any service faithfully rendered to Him, we had better not be too sure that true service is ever small, or that the work that attracts attention and is christened by men 'great' is really so in His eyes. It is well to have the noble ambition to 'desire earnestly the greater gifts,' but it is better to 'follow the more excellent way,' and to seek after the love which knows nothing of great or small, and without which prophecy and the knowledge of all mysteries, and all conspicuous and all the shining qualities profit nothing.

We can discern in Tertius' words a little touch of what we may call pride in his work. No doubt he knew it to be subordinate, but he also knew it to be needful; and no doubt he had put all his strength into doing it well. No man will put his best into any task which he does not undertake in such a spirit. It is a very plain piece of homely

wisdom that ‘what is worth doing at all is worth doing well.’ Without a lavish expenditure of the utmost care and effort, our work will tend to be slovenly and unpleasing to God, and man, and to ourselves. We may be sure there were no blots and bits of careless writing in Tertius' manuscript, and that he would not have claimed the friendly feelings of his Roman brethren, if he had not felt that he had put his best into the writing of this epistle. The great word of King David has a very wide application. ‘I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.’

Tertius’ salutation may suggest to us the best thing by which to be remembered. All his life before and after the hours spent at Paul's side has sunk in oblivion. He wished to be known only as having written the Epistle. Christian souls ought to desire to live chiefly in the remembrance of those to whom they have been known as having done some little bit of work for Jesus Christ. We may well ask ourselves whether there is anything in our lives by which we should thus wish to be remembered. All our many activities will sink into silence; but if the stream of our life, which has borne along down its course so much mud and sand, has brought some grains of gold in the form of faithful and loving service to Christ and men—these will not be lost in the ocean, but treasured by Him. What we do for Jesus and to spread the knowledge of His name is the immortal part of our mortal lives, and abides in His memory and in blessed

results in our own characters, when all the rest that made our busy and often stormy days has passed into oblivion. All that we know of Tertius who wrote this Epistle is that he wrote it. Well will it be for us if the summary of our lives be something like that of his!

QUARTUS A BROTHER

'Quartus a brother.'—ROMANS xvi. 23.

I am afraid very few of us read often, or with much interest, those long lists of names at the end of Paul's letters. And yet there are plenty of lessons in them, if anybody will look at them lovingly and carefully. There does not seem much in these three words; but I am very much mistaken if they will not prove to be full of beauty and pathos, and to open out into a wonderful revelation of what Christianity is and does, as soon as we try to freshen them up into some kind of human interest.

It is easy for us to make a little picture of this brother Quartus. He is evidently an entire stranger to the Church in Rome. They had never heard his name before: none of them knew anything about him. Further, he is evidently a man of no especial reputation or position in the Church at Corinth, from which Paul writes. He contrasts strikingly with the others who send

salutations to Rome. ‘Timotheus, my work-fellow’—the companion and helper of the Apostle, whose name was known everywhere among the Churches, heads the list. Then come other prominent men of his more immediate circle. Then follows a loving greeting from Paul's amanuensis, who, naturally, as the pen is in his own hand, says: ‘*I*, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.’ Then Paul begins again to dictate, and the list runs on. Next comes a message from ‘Gaius mine host, and of the whole Church’—an influential man in the community, apparently rich, and willing, as well as able, to extend to them large and loving hospitality. Erastus, the chamberlain or treasurer of the city, follows—a man of consequence in Corinth. And then, among all these people of mark, comes the modest, quiet Quartus. He has no wealth like Gaius, nor civic position like Erastus, nor wide reputation like Timothy. He is only a good, simple, unknown Christian. He feels a spring of love open in his heart to these brethren far across the sea, whom he never met. He would like them to know that he thought lovingly of them, and to be lovingly thought of by them. So he begs a little corner in Paul's letter, and gets it; and there, in his little niche, like some statue of a forgotten saint, scarce seen amidst the glories of a great cathedral, ‘Quartus a brother’ stands to all time.

The first thing that strikes me in connection with these words is, how deep and real they show that new bond of Christian love to have

been.

A little incident of this sort is more impressive than any amount of mere talk about the uniting influence of the Gospel. Here we get a glimpse of the power in actual operation in a man's heart, and if we think of all that this simple greeting presupposes and implies, and of all that had to be overcome before it could have been sent, we may well see in it the sign of the greatest revolution that was ever wrought in men's relations to one another, Quartus was an inhabitant of Corinth, from which city this letter was written. His Roman name may indicate Roman descent, but of that we cannot be sure. Just as probably he may have been a Greek by birth, and so have had to stretch his hand across a deep crevasse of national antipathy, in order to clasp the hands of his brethren in the great city. There was little love lost between Rome, the rough imperious conqueror, and Corinth, prostrate and yet restive under her bonds, and nourishing remembrances of a freedom which Rome had crushed, and of a culture that Rome haltingly followed.

And how many other deep gulfs of separation had to be bridged before that Christian sense of oneness could be felt! It is impossible for us to throw ourselves completely back to the condition of things which the Gospel found. The world then was like some great field of cooled lava on the slopes of a volcano, all broken up by a labyrinth of clefts and cracks, at the bottom of

which one can see the flicker of sulphurous flames. Great gulfs of national hatred, of fierce enmities of race, language, and religion; wide separations of social condition, far profounder than anything of the sort which we know, split mankind into fragments. On the one side was the freeman, on the other, the slave; on the one side, the Gentile, on the other, the Jew; on the one side, the insolence and hard-handedness of Roman rule, on the other, the impotent, and therefore envenomed, hatred of conquered peoples.

And all this fabric, full of active repulsions and disintegrating forces, was bound together into an artificial and unreal unity by the iron clamp of Rome's power, holding up the bulging walls that were ready to fall—the unity of the slave-gang manacled together for easier driving. Into this hideous condition of things the Gospel comes, and silently flings its clasping tendrils over the wide gaps, and binds the crumbling structure of human society with a new bond, real and living. We know well enough that that was so, but we are helped to apprehend it by seeing, as it were, the very process going on before our eyes, in this message from ‘Quartus a brother.’

It reminds us that the very notion of humanity, and of the brotherhood of man, is purely Christian. A world-embracing society, held together by love, was not dreamt of before the Gospel came; and since the Gospel came it is

more than a dream. If you wrench away the idea from its foundation, as people do who talk about fraternity, and seek to bring it to pass without Christ, it is a mere piece of Utopian sentiment—a fine dream. But in Christianity it worked. It works imperfectly enough, God knows. Still there is some reality in it, and some power. The Gospel first of all produced the thing and the practice, and then the theory came afterwards. The Church did not talk much about the brotherhood of man, or the unity of the race; but simply ignored all distinctions, and gathered into the fold the slave and his master, the Roman and his subject, fair-haired Goths and swarthy Arabians, the worshippers of Odin and of Zeus, the Jew and the Gentile. That actual unity, utterly irrespective of all distinctions, which came naturally in the train of the Gospel, was the first attempt to realise the oneness of the race, and first taught the world that all men were brethren.

And before this simple word of greeting could have been sent, and the unknown man in Corinth felt love to a company of unknown men in Rome, some profound new impulse must have been given to the world; something altogether unlike any of the forces hitherto in existence. What was that? What should it be but the story of One who gave Himself for the whole world, who binds men into a unity because of His common relation to them all, and through whom the great proclamation can be made: ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor

free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.' Brother Quartus' message, like some tiny flower above-ground which tells of a spreading root beneath, is a modest witness to that mighty revolution, and presupposes the preaching of a Saviour in whom he and his unseen friends in Rome are one.

So let us learn not to confine our sympathy and the play of our Christian affection within the limits of our personal knowledge. We must go further a-field than that. Like this man, let us sometimes send our thoughts across mountains and seas. He knew nobody in the Roman Church, and nobody knew him, but he wished to stretch out his hand to them, and to feel, as it were, the pressure of their fingers in his palm. That is a pattern for us.

Let me suggest another thing. Quartus was a Corinthian. The Corinthian Church was remarkable for its quarrellings and dissensions. One said, 'I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' I wonder if our friend Quartus belonged to any of these parties? There is nothing more likely than that he had a much warmer glow of Christian love to the brethren over there in Rome than to those who sat on the same bench with him in the upper room at Corinth. For you know that sometimes it is true about people, as well as about scenery, that 'distance lends enchantment to the view.' A great many of us have much keener sympathies with 'brethren' who are well

out of our reach, and whose peculiarities do not jar against ours, than with those who are nearest. I do not say Quartus was one of these, but he may very well have been one of the wranglers in Corinth who found it much easier to love his brother whom he had not seen than his brother whom he had seen. So take the hint, if you need it. Do not let your Christian love go wandering away abroad only, but keep some for home consumption.

Again, how simply, and with what unconscious beauty, the deep reason for our Christian unity is given in that one word, a 'Brother.' As if he had said, Never mind telling them anything about what I am, what place I hold, or what I do. Tell them I am a brother, that will be enough. It is the only name by which I care to be known; it is the name which explains my love to them.

We are brethren because we are sons of one Father. So that favourite name, by which the early Christians knew each other, rested upon and proclaimed the deep truth that they knew themselves to be all partakers of a common life derived from one Parent. When they said they were brethren, they implied, 'We have been born again by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.' The great Christian truth of regeneration, the communication of a divine life from God the Father, through Christ the Son, by the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of Christian brotherhood. So the name is no mere piece of

effusive sentiment, but expresses a profound fact. ‘To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God,’ and therein to become the brethren of all His sons.

That is the true ground of our unity, and of our obligation to love all who are begotten of Him. You cannot safely put them on any other footing. All else—identity of opinion, similarity of practice and ceremonial, local or national ties, and the like—all else is insufficient. It may be necessary for Christian communities to require in addition a general identity of opinion, and even some uniformity in government and form of worship; but if ever they come to fancy that such subordinate conditions of visible oneness are the grounds of their spiritual unity, and to enforce these as such, they are slipping off the real foundation, and are perilling their character as Churches of Christ. The true ground of the unity of all Christians is here: ‘Have we not all one Father?’ We possess a kindred life derived from Him. We are a family of brethren because we are sons.

Another remark is, how strangely and unwittingly this good man has got himself an immortality by that passing thought of his. One loving message has won for him the prize for which men have joyfully given life itself,—an eternal place in history. Wheresoever the Gospel is preached there also shall this be told as a memorial of him. How much surprised he would have been if, as he leaned forward to Tertius

hurrying to end his task and said, ‘Send my love too,’ anybody had told him that that one act of his would last as long as the world, and his name be known for ever! And how much ashamed some of the other people in the New Testament would have been if they had known that their passing faults—the quarrel of Euodia and Syntyche for instance—were to be gibbeted for ever in the same fashion! How careful they would have been, and we would be, of our behaviour if we knew that it was to be pounced down upon and made immortal in that style! Suppose you were to be told—Your thoughts and acts to-morrow at twelve o'clock will be recorded for all the world to read—you would be pretty careful how you behaved. When a speaker sees the reporters in front of him, he weighs his words.

Well, Quartus' little message is written down here, and the world knows it. All our words and works are getting put down too, in another Book up there, and it is going to be read out one day. It does seem wonderful that you and I should live as we do, knowing that all the while that God is recording it all. If we are not ashamed to do things, and let Him note them on His tablets that they may be for the time to come, for ever and ever, it is strange that we should be more careful to attitudinise and pose ourselves before one another than before Him. Let us then keep ever in mind ‘those pure eyes and perfect witness of the all-judging’ God. The eternal record of this little message is only a symbol of

the eternal life and eternal record of all our transient and trivial thoughts and deeds before Him. Let us live so that each act, if recorded, would shine with some modest ray of true light like brother Quartus' greeting, and let us seek that, like him,—all else about us being forgotten, position, talents, wealth, buried in the dust,—we may be remembered, if we are remembered at all, by such a biography as is condensed into these three words. Who would not wish to be embalmed, so to speak, in such a record? Who would not wish to have such an epitaph as this? A sweet fate to live for ever in the world's memory by three words which tell his name, his Christianity, and his brotherly love! So far as we are remembered at all, may the like be our life's history and our epitaph!

EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D., Litt.D.

CORINTHIANS
(To II Corinthians, Chap. V)

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PART 1

I. CORINTHIANS

CALLING ON THE NAME

> ‘All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.’—1 COR. i. 2.

There are some difficulties, with which I need not trouble you, about both the translation and the connection of these words. One thing is quite clear, that in them the Apostle associates the church at Corinth with the whole mass of Christian believers in the world. The question may arise whether he does so in the sense that he addresses his letter both to the church at

Corinth and to the whole of the churches, and so makes it a catholic epistle. That is extremely unlikely, considering how all but entirely this letter is taken up with dealing with the especial conditions of the Corinthian church. Rather I should suppose that he is simply intending to remind 'the Church of God at Corinth ... sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,' that they are in real, living union with the whole body of believers. Just as the water in a little land-locked bay, connected with the sea by some narrow strait like that at Corinth, is yet part of the whole ocean that rolls round the world, so that little community of Christians had its living bond of union with all the brethren in every place that called upon the name of Jesus Christ.

Whichever view on that detail of interpretation be taken, this phrase, as a designation of Christians, is worth considering. It is one of many expressions found in the New Testament as names for them, some of which have now dropped out of general use, while some are still retained. It is singular that the name of 'Christian,' which has all but superseded all others, was originally invented as a jeer by sarcastic wits at Antioch, and never appears in the New Testament, as a name by which believers called themselves. Important lessons are taught by these names, such as disciples, believers, brethren, saints, those of the way, and so on, each of which embodies some characteristic of a follower of Jesus. So this appellation in the text, 'those who call upon the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' may yield not unimportant lessons if it be carefully weighed, and to some of these I would ask your attention now.

I. First, it gives us a glimpse into the worship of the primitive Church.

To 'call on the name of the Lord' is an expression that comes straight out of the Old Testament. It means there distinctly adoration and invocation, and it means precisely these things when it is referred to Jesus Christ.

We find in the Acts of the Apostles that the very first sermon that was preached at Pentecost by Peter all turns upon this phrase. He quotes the Old Testament saying, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,' and then goes on to prove that 'the Lord,' the 'calling on whose Name' is salvation, is Jesus Christ; and winds up with 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

Again we find that Ananias of Damascus, when Jesus Christ appeared to him and told him to go to Paul and lay his hands upon him, shrank from the perilous task because Paul had been sent to 'bind them that call upon the name of the Lord,' and to persecute them. We find the same phrase recurring in other connections, so that, on the whole, we may take the expression as a recognised designation of Christians.

This was their characteristic, that they prayed to Jesus Christ. The very first word, so far as we know, that Paul ever heard from a Christian was, ‘Lord Jesus! receive my spirit.’ He heard that cry of calm faith which, when he heard it, would sound to him as horrible blasphemy from Stephen's dying lips. How little he dreamed that he himself was soon to cry to the same Jesus, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ and was in after-days to beseech Him thrice for deliverance, and to be answered by sufficient grace. How little he dreamed that, when his own martyrdom was near, he too would look to Jesus as Lord and righteous Judge, from whose hands all who loved His appearing should receive their crown! Nor only Paul directs desires and adoration to Jesus as Lord; the last words of Scripture are a cry to Him as Lord to come quickly, and an invocation of His ‘grace’ on all believing souls.

Prayer to Christ from the very beginning of the Christian Church was, then, the characteristic of believers, and He to whom they prayed, thus, from the beginning, was recognised by them as being a Divine Person, God manifest in the flesh.

The object of their worship, then, was known by the people among whom they lived. Singing hymns to Christus as a god is nearly all that the Roman proconsul in his well-known letter could find to tell his master of their worship. They were the worshippers—not merely the disciples

—of one Christ. That was their peculiar distinction. Among the worshippers of the false gods they stood erect; before Him, and Him only, they bowed. In Corinth there was the polluted worship of Aphrodite and of Zeus. These men called not on the name of these lustful and stained deities, but on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And everybody knew whom they worshipped, and understood whose men they were. Is that true about us? Do we Christian men so habitually cultivate the remembrance of Jesus Christ, and are we so continually in the habit of invoking His aid, and of contemplating His blessed perfections and sufficiency, that every one who knew us would recognise us as meant by those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

If this be the proper designation of Christian people, alas! alas! for so many of the professing Christians of this day, whom neither bystanders nor themselves would think of as included in such a name!

Further, the connection here shows that the divine worship of Christ was universal among the churches. There was no ‘place’ where it was not practised, no community calling itself a church to whom He was not the Lord to be invoked and adored. This witness to the early and universal recognition in the Christian communities of the divinity of our Lord is borne by an undisputedly genuine epistle of Paul's. It is one of the four which the most thorough-going

destructive criticism accepts as genuine. It was written before the Gospels, and is a voice from the earlier period of Paul's apostleship. Hence the importance of its attestation to this fact that all Christians everywhere, both Jewish, who had been trained in strict monotheism, and Gentile, who had burned incense at many a foul shrine, were perfectly joined together in this, that in all their need they called on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and brought to Him, as divine, adoration not to be rendered to any creatures. From the day of Pentecost onwards, a Christian was not merely a disciple, a follower, or an admirer, but a worshipper of Christ, the Lord.

II. We may see here an unfolding of the all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

Note that solemn accumulation, in the language of my text, of all the designations by which He is called, sometimes separately and sometimes unitedly, the name of ‘our Lord Jesus Christ.’ We never find that full title given to Him in Scripture except when the writer's mind is labouring to express the manifoldness and completeness of our Lord's relations to men, and the largeness and sufficiency of the blessings which He brings. In this context I find in the first nine or ten verses of this chapter, so full is the Apostle of the thoughts of the greatness and wonderfulness of his dear Lord on whose name he calls, that six or seven times he employs this solemn, full designation.

Now, if we look at the various elements of this great name we shall get various aspects of the way in which calling on Christ is the strength of our souls.

'Call on the name of—the Lord.' That is the Old Testament Jehovah. There is no mistaking nor denying, if we candidly consider the evidence of the New Testament writings, that, when we read of Jesus Christ as 'Lord,' in the vast majority of cases, the title is not a mere designation of human authority, but is an attribution to Him of divine nature and dignity. We have, then, to ascribe to Him, and to call on Him as possessing, all which that great and incommunicable Name certified and sealed to the Jewish Church as their possession in their God. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is our Lord of the New. He whose being is eternal, underived, self-sufficing, self-determining, knowing no variation, no diminution, no age, He who is because He is and that He is, dwells in His fulness in our Saviour. To worship Him is not to divert worship from the one God, nor is it to have other gods besides Him. Christianity is as much monotheistic as Judaism was, and the law of its worship is the old law—Him only shalt thou serve. It is the divine will that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

But what is it to call on the name of Jesus? That name implies all the sweetness of His manhood. He is our Brother. The name 'Jesus' is

one that many a Jewish boy bore in our Lord's own time and before it; though, afterwards, of course, abhorrence on the part of the Jew and reverence on the part of the Christian caused it almost entirely to disappear. But at the time when He bore it it was as undistinguished a name as Simeon, or Judas, or any other of His followers' names. To call upon the name of Jesus means to realise and bring near to ourselves, for our consolation and encouragement, for our strength and peace, the blessed thought of His manhood, so really and closely knit to ours; to grasp the blessedness of the thought that He knows our frame because He Himself has worn it, and understands and pities our weakness, being Himself a man. To Him whom we adore as Lord we draw near in tenderer, but not less humble and prostrate, adoration as our brother when we call on the name of the Lord Jesus, and thus embrace as harmonious, and not contradictory, both the divinity of the Lord and the humanity of Jesus.

To call on the name of Christ is to embrace in our faith and to beseech the exercise on our behalf of all which Jesus is as the Messiah, anointed by God with the fulness of the Spirit. As such He is the climax, and therefore the close of all revelation, who is the long-expected fruition of the desire of weary hearts, the fulfilment, and therefore the abolition, of sacrifice and temple and priesthood and prophecy and all that witnessed for Him ere He came. We further call on the name of Christ the

Anointed, on whom the whole fulness of the Divine Spirit dwelt in order that, calling upon Him, that fulness may in its measure be granted to us.

So the name of the Lord Jesus Christ brings to view the divine, the human, the Messiah, the anointed Lord of the Spirit, and Giver of the divine life. To call on His name is to be blessed, to be made pure and strong, joyous and immortal. 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' Call on His name in the day of trouble and ye shall be heard and helped.

III. Lastly, this text suggests what a Christian life should be.

We have already remarked that to call on the name of Jesus was the distinctive peculiarity of the early believers, which marked them off as a people by themselves. Would it be a true designation of the bulk of so-called Christians now? You do not object to profess yourself a Christian, or, perhaps, even to say that you are a disciple of Christ, or even to go the length of calling yourself a follower and imitator. But are you a worshipper of Him? In your life have you the habit of meditating on Him as Lord, as Jesus, as Christ, and of refreshing and gladdening dusty days and fainting strength by the living water, drawn from the one unfailing stream from these triple fountains? Is the invocation of His aid habitual with you?

There needs no long elaborate supplication to secure His aid. How much has been done in the Church's history by short bursts of prayer, as ‘Lord, help me!’ spoken or unspoken in the moment of extremity! ‘They cried unto God in the battle.’ They would not have time for very lengthy petitions then, would they? They would not give much heed to elegant arrangement of them or suiting them to the canons of human eloquence. ‘They cried unto God in the battle’; whilst the enemy's swords were flashing and the arrows whistling about their ears. These were circumstances to make a prayer a ‘cry’; no composed and stately utterance of an elegantly modulated voice, nor a languid utterance without earnestness, but a short, sharp, loud call, such as danger presses from panting lungs and parched throats. Therefore the cry was answered, ‘and He was entreated of them.’ ‘Lord, save us, we perish!’ was a very brief prayer, but it brought its answer. And so we, in like manner, may go through our warfare and work, and day by day as we encounter sudden bursts of temptation may meet them with sudden jets of petition, and thus put out their fires. And the same help avails for long-continuing as for sudden needs. Some of us may have to carry lifelong burdens and to fight in a battle ever renewed. It may seem as if our cry was not heard, since the enemy's assault is not weakened, nor our power to beat it back perceptibly increased. But the appeal is not in vain, and when the fight is over, if not before,

we shall know what reinforcements of strength to our weakness were due to our poor cry entering into the ears of our Lord and Brother. No other 'name' is permissible as our plea or as recipient of our prayer. In and on the name of the Lord we must call, and if we do, anything is possible rather than that the promise which was claimed for the Church and referred to Jesus, in the very first Christian preaching on Pentecost, should not be fulfilled—'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

'In every place.' We may venture to subject the words of my text to a little gentle pressure here. The Apostle only meant to express the universal characteristics of Christians everywhere. But we may venture to give a different turn to the words, and learn from them the duty of devout communion with Christ as a duty for each of us wherever we are. If a place is not fit to pray in it is not fit to be in. We may carry praying hearts, remembrances of the Lord, sweet, though they may be swift and short, contemplations of His grace, His love, His power, His sufficiency, His nearness, His punctual help, like a hidden light in our hearts, into all the dusty ways of life, and in every place call on His name. There is no place so dismal but that thoughts of Him will make sunshine in it; no work so hard, so commonplace, so prosaic, so uninteresting, but that it will become the opposite of all these if whatever we do is done in remembrance of our Lord. Nothing will be too hard for us to do, and nothing too bitter for us to

swallow, and nothing too sad for us to bear, if only over all that befalls us and all that we undertake and endeavour we make the sign of the Cross and call upon the name of the Lord. If 'in every place' we have Him as the object of our faith and desire, and as the Hearer of our petition, in 'every place' we shall have Him for our help, and all will be full of His bright presence; and though we have to journey through the wilderness we shall ever drink of that spiritual rock that will follow us, and that Rock is Christ. In every place call upon His name, and every place will be a house of God, and a gate of heaven to our waiting souls.

PERISHING OR BEING SAVED

> 'For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.'—1 COR. i. 18.

The starting-point of my remarks is the observation that a slight variation of rendering, which will be found in the Revised Version, brings out the true meaning of these words. Instead of reading 'them that perish' and 'us which are saved,' we ought to read 'them that *are perishing*,' and 'us which *are being* saved.' That is to say, the Apostle represents the two contrasted conditions, not so much as fixed states, either present or future, but rather as

processes which are going on, and are manifestly, in the present, incomplete. That opens some very solemn and intensely practical considerations.

Then I may further note that this antithesis includes the whole of the persons to whom the Gospel is preached. In one or other of these two classes they all stand. Further, we have to observe that the consideration which determines the class to which men belong, is the attitude which they respectively take to the preaching of the Cross. If it be, and because it is, 'foolishness' to some, they belong to the catalogue of the perishing. If it be, and because it is, 'the power of God' to others, they belong to the class of those who are in process of being saved.

So, then, we have the ground cleared for two or three very simple, but, as it seems to me, very important thoughts.

I. I desire, first, to look at the two contrasted conditions, 'perishing' and 'being saved.'

Now we shall best, I think, understand the force of the darker of these two terms if we first ask what is the force of the brighter and more radiant. If we understand what the Apostle means by 'saving' and 'salvation' we shall understand also what he means by 'perishing.'

If, then, we turn for a moment to Scripture analogy and teaching, we find that that threadbare word 'salvation,' which we all take it

for granted that we understand, and which, like a well-worn coin, has been so passed from hand to hand that it scarcely remains legible—that well-worn word ‘salvation’ starts from a double metaphorical meaning. It means either—and is used for both—being healed or being made safe. In the one sense it is often employed in the Gospel narratives of our Lord's miracles, and it involves the metaphor of a sick man and his cure; in the other it involves the metaphor of a man in peril and his deliverance and security. The negative side, then, of the Gospel idea of salvation is the making whole from a disease, and the making safe from a danger. Negatively, it is the removal from each of us of the one sickness, which is sin; and the one danger, which is the reaping of the fruits and consequences of sin, in their variety as guilt, remorse, habit, and slavery under it, perverted relation to God, a fearful apprehension of penal consequences here, and, if there be a hereafter, there, too. The sickness of soul and the perils that threaten life, flow from the central fact of sin, and salvation consists, negatively, in the sweeping away of all of these, whether the sin itself, or the fatal facility with which we yield to it, or the desolation and perversion which it brings into all the faculties and susceptibilities, or the perversion of relation to God, and the consequent evils, here and hereafter, which throng around the evil-doer. The sick man is healed, and the man in peril is set in safety.

But, besides that, there is a great deal more.

The cure is incomplete till the full tide of health follows convalescence. When God saves, He does not only bar up the iron gate through which the hosts of evil rush out upon the defenceless soul, but He flings wide the golden gate through which the glad troops of blessings and of graces flock around the delivered spirit, and enrich it with all joys and with all beauties. So the positive side of salvation is the investiture of the saved man with throbbing health through all his veins, and the strength that comes from a divine life. It is the bestowal upon the delivered man of everything that he needs for blessedness and for duty. All good conferred, and every evil banned back into its dark den, such is the Christian conception of salvation. It is much that the negative should be accomplished, but it is little in comparison with the rich fulness of positive endowments, of happiness, and of holiness which make an integral part of the salvation of God.

This, then, being the one side, what about the other? If this be salvation, its precise opposite is the Scriptural idea of 'perishing.' Utter ruin lies in the word, the entire failure to be what God meant a man to be. That is in it, and no contortions of arbitrary interpretation can knock that solemn significance out of the dreadful expression. If salvation be the cure of the sickness, perishing is the fatal end of the unchecked disease. If salvation be the deliverance from the outstretched claws of the harpy evils that crowd about the trembling soul,

then perishing is the fixing of their poisoned talons into their prey, and their rending of it into fragments.

Of course that is metaphor, but no metaphor can be half so dreadful as the plain, prosaic fact that the exact opposite of the salvation, which consists in the healing from sin and the deliverance from danger, and in the endowment with all gifts good and beautiful, is the Christian idea of the alternative 'perishing.' Then it means the disease running its course. It means the dangers laying hold of the man in peril. It means the withdrawal, or the non-bestowal, of all which is good, whether it be good of holiness or good of happiness. It does not mean, as it seems to me, the cessation of conscious existence, any more than salvation means the bestowal of conscious existence. But he who perishes knows that he has perished, even as he knows the process while he is in the process of perishing. Therefore, we have to think of the gradual fading away from consciousness, and dying out of a life, of many things beautiful and sweet and gracious, of the gradual increase of distance from Him, union with whom is the condition of true life, of the gradual sinking into the pit of utter ruin, of the gradual increase of that awful death in life and life in death in which living consciousness makes the conscious subject aware that he is lost; lost to God, lost to himself.

Brethren, it is no part of my business to enlarge upon such awful thoughts, but the

brighter the light of salvation, the darker the eclipse of ruin which rings it round. This, then, is the first contrast.

II. Now note, secondly, the progressiveness of both members of the alternative.

All states of heart or mind tend to increase, by the very fact of continuance. Life is a process, and every part of a spiritual being is in living motion and continuous action in a given direction. So the law for the world, and for every man in it, in all regions of his life, quite as much as in the religious, is 'To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.'

Look, then, at this thought of the process by which these two conditions become more and more confirmed, consolidated, and complete. Salvation is a progressive fact. In the New Testament we have that great idea looked at from three points of view. Sometimes it is spoken of as having been accomplished in the past in the case of every believing soul—'Ye have been saved' is said more than once. Sometimes it is spoken of as being accomplished in the present—'Ye are saved' is said more than once. And sometimes it is relegated to the future —'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,' and the like. But there are a number of New Testament passages which coincide with this text in regarding salvation as, not the work of any one moment, but as a continuous operation running through life, not a point

either in the past, present, or future, but a continued life. As, for instance, 'The Lord added to the Church daily those that were being saved.' By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are being sanctified. And in a passage in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, which, in some respects, is an exact parallel to that of my text, we read of the preaching of the Gospel as being a 'savour of Christ in them that are being saved, and in them that are perishing.'

So the process of being saved is going on as long as a Christian man lives in this world; and every one who professes to be Christ's follower ought, day by day, to be growing more and more saved, more fully filled with that Divine Spirit, more entirely the conqueror of his own lusts and passions and evil, more and more invested with all the gifts of holiness and of blessedness which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon him.

Ah, brethren! that notion of a progressive salvation at work in all true Christians has all but faded away out of the beliefs, as it has all but disappeared from the experience, of hosts of you that call yourselves Christ's followers, and are not a bit further on than you were ten years ago; are no more healed of your corruptions (perhaps less so, for relapses are dangerous) than you were then—have not advanced any further into the depths of God than when you first got a glimpse of Him as loving, and your Father, in Jesus Christ—are contented to linger, like some weak band of invaders in a strange

land, on the borders and coasts, instead of pressing inwards and making it all your own. Growing Christians—may I venture to say?—are not the majority of professing Christians.

And, on the other side, as certainly, there are progressive deterioration and approximation to disintegration and ruin. How many men there are listening to me now who were far nearer being delivered from their sins when they were lads than they have ever been since! How many in whom the sensibility to the message of salvation has disappeared, in whom the world has ossified their consciences and their hearts, in whom there is a more entire and unstruggling submission to low things and selfish things and worldly things and wicked things, than there used to be! I am sure that there are not a few among us now who were far better, and far happier, when they were poor and young, and could still thrill with generous emotion and tremble at the Word of God, than they are to-day. Why! there are some of you that could no more bring back your former loftier impulses, and compunction of spirit and throbs of desire towards Christ and His salvation, than you could bring back the birds' nests or the snows of your youthful years. You are perishing, in the very process of going down and down into the dark.

Now, notice, that the Apostle treats these two classes as covering the whole ground of the hearers of the Word, and as alternatives. If not in the one class we are in the other. Ah,

brethren! life is no level plane, but a steep incline, on which there is no standing still, and if you try to stand still, down you go. Either up or down must be the motion. If you are not more of a Christian than you were a year ago, you are less. If you are not more saved—for there is a degree of comparison—if you are not more saved, you are less saved.

Now, do not let that go over your head as pulpit thunder, meaning nothing. It means *you*, and, whether you feel or think it or not, one or other of these two solemn developments is at this moment going on in you. And that is not a thought to be put lightly on one side.

Further, note what a light such considerations as these, that salvation and perishing are vital processes—'going on all the time,' as the Americans say—throw upon the future. Clearly the two processes are incomplete here. You get the direction of the line, but not its natural termination. And thus a heaven and a hell are demanded by the phenomena of growing goodness and of growing badness which we see round about us. The arc of the circle is partially swept. Are the compasses going to stop at the point where the grave comes in? By no means. Round they will go, and will complete the circle. But that is not all. The necessity for progress will persist after death; and all through the duration of immortal being, goodness, blessedness, holiness, Godlikeness, will, on the one hand, grow in brighter lustre; and on the other,

alienation from God, loss of the noble elements of the nature, and all the other doleful darknesses which attend that conception of a lost man, will increase likewise. And so, two people, sitting side by side here now, may start from the same level, and by the operation of the one principle the one may rise, and rise, and rise, till he is lost in God, and so finds himself, and the other sink, and sink, and sink, into the obscurity of woe and evil that lies beneath every human life as a possibility.

III. And now, lastly, notice the determining attitude to the Cross which settles the class to which we belong.

Paul, in my text, is explaining his reason for not preaching the Gospel with what he calls ‘the words of man's wisdom,’ and he says, in effect, ‘It would be of no use if I did, because what settles whether the Cross shall look “foolishness” to a man or not is the man's whole moral condition, and what settles whether a man shall find it to be “the power of God” or not is whether he has passed into the region of those that are being saved.’

So there are two thoughts suggested which sound as if they were illogically combined, but which yet are both true. It is true that men perish, or are saved, because the Cross is to them respectively ‘foolishness’ or ‘the power of God’; and the other thing is also true, that the Cross is to them ‘foolishness,’ or ‘the power of

God' because, respectively, they are perishing or being saved. That is not putting the cart before the horse, but both aspects of the truth are true.

If you see nothing in Jesus Christ, and His death for us all, except 'foolishness,' something unfit to do you any good, and unnecessary to be taken into account in your lives—oh, my friends! *that* is the condemnation of your eyes, and not of the thing you look at. If a man, gazing on the sun at twelve o'clock on a June day, says to me, 'It is not bright,' the only thing I have to say to him is, 'Friend, you had better go to an oculist.' And if to us the Cross is 'foolishness,' it is because already a process of 'perishing' has gone so far that it has attacked our capacity of recognising the wisdom and love of God when we see them.

But, on the other hand, if we clasp that Cross in simple trust, we find that it is the power which saves us out of all sins, sorrows, and dangers, and 'shall save us' at last 'into His heavenly kingdom.'

Dear friends, that message leaves no man exactly as it found him. My words, I feel, in this sermon, have been very poor, set by the side of the greatness of the theme; but, poor as they have been, you will not be exactly the same man after them, if you have listened to them, as you were before. The difference may be very imperceptible, but it will be real. One more, almost invisible, film, over the eyeball; one more

thin layer of wax in the ear; one more fold of insensibility round heart and conscience—or else some yielding to the love; some finger put out to take the salvation; some lightening of the pressure of the sickness; some removal of the peril and the danger. The same sun hurts diseased eyes, and gladdens sound ones. The same fire melts wax and hardens clay. 'This Child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel.' 'To the one He is the savour of life unto life; to the other He is the savour of death unto death.' *Which* is He, for He *is* one of them, to you?

THE APOSTLE'S THEME

'I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.'—1 COR. ii. 2.

Many of you are aware that to-day I close forty years of ministry in this city—I cannot say to this congregation, for there are very, very few that can go back with me in memory to the beginning of these years. You will bear me witness that I seldom intrude personal references into the pulpit, but perhaps it would be affectation not to do so now. Looking back over these long years, many thoughts arise which cannot be spoken in public. But one thing I may say, and that is, that I am grateful to God and to you, dear friends, for the unbroken harmony,

confidence, affection, and forbearance which have brightened and lightened my work. Of its worth I cannot judge; its imperfections I know better than the most unfavourable critic; but I can humbly take the words of this text as expressive, not, indeed, of my attainments, but of my aims. One of my texts, on my first Sunday in Manchester, was 'We preach Christ and Him crucified,' and I look back, and venture to say that the noble words of this text have been, however imperfectly followed, my guiding star.

Now, I wish to say a word or two, less personal perhaps, and yet, as you can well suppose, not without a personal reference in my own consciousness.

I. Note here first, then, the Apostolic theme—Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Now, the Apostle, in this context, gives us a little autobiographical glimpse which is singularly and interestingly confirmed by some slight incidental notices in the Book of the Acts. He says, in the context, that he was with the Corinthians 'in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,' and, if we turn to the narrative, we find that a singular period of silence, apparent abandonment of his work and dejection, seems to have synchronised with his coming to the great city of Corinth. The reasons were very plain. He had recently come into Europe for the first time and had had to front a new condition of things, very different from

what he had found in Palestine or in Asia Minor. His experience had not been encouraging. He had been imprisoned in Philippi; he had been smuggled away by night from Thessalonica; he had been hounded from Berea; he had all but wholly failed to make any impression in Athens, and in his solitude he came to Corinth, and lay quiet, and took stock of his adversaries. He came to the conclusion which he records in my text; he felt that it was not for him to argue with philosophers, or to attempt to vie with Sophists and professional orators, but that his only way to meet Greek civilisation, Greek philosophy, Greek eloquence, Greek self-conceit, was to preach ‘Christ and Him crucified.’ The determination was not come to in ignorance of the conditions that were fronting him. He knew Corinth, its wealth, its wickedness, its culture, and knowing these he said, ‘I have made up my mind that I will know nothing amongst you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’

So, then, this Apostle's conception of his theme was—the biography of a Man, with especial emphasis laid on one act in His history —His death. Christianity is Christ, and Christ is Christianity. His relation to the truth that He proclaimed, and to the truths that may be deducible from the story of His life and death, is altogether different from the relation of any other founder of a religion to the truths that he has proclaimed. For in these you can accept the teaching, and ignore the teacher. But you cannot do that with Christianity; ‘I am the Way, and the

Truth, and the Life'; and in that revealing biography, which is the preacher's theme, the palpitating heart and centre is the death upon the Cross. So, whatever else Christianity comes to be—and it comes to be a great deal else—the principle of its growth, and the germ which must vitalise the whole, lie in the personality and the death of Jesus Christ.

That is not all. The history of the life and the death want something more to make them a gospel. The fact, I was going to say, is the least part of the fact; as in some vegetable growths, there is far more underground than above. For, unless along with, involved in, and deducible from, but capable of being stated separately from, the external facts, there is a certain commentary or explanation of them: the history is a history, the biography is a biography, the story of the Cross is a touching narrative, but it is no gospel.

And what was Paul's commentary which lifted the bare facts up into the loftier region? This—as for the person, Jesus Christ 'declared to be the son of God with power'—as for the fact of the death, 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' Let in these two conceptions into the facts—and they are the necessary explanation and presupposition of the facts—the Incarnation and the Sacrifice, and then you get what Paul calls 'my gospel,' not because it was his invention, but because it was the trust committed to him. That is the Gospel which

alone answers to the facts which he deals with; and that is the Gospel which, God helping me, I have for forty years tried to preach.

We hear a great deal at present, or we did a few years ago, about this generation having recovered Jesus Christ, and about the necessity of going 'back to the Christ of the Gospels.' By all means, I say, if in the process you do not lose the Christ of the Epistles, who is the Christ of the Gospels, too. I am free to admit that a past generation has wrapped theological cobwebs round the gracious figure of Christ with disastrous results. For it is perfectly possible to know the things that are said about Him, and not to know Him about whom these things are said. But the mistake into which the present generation is far more likely to fall than that of substituting theology for Christ, is the converse one—that of substituting an undefined Christ for the Christ of the Gospels and the Epistles, the Incarnate Son of God, who died for our salvation. And that is a more disastrous mistake than the other, for you can know nothing about Him and He can be nothing to you, except as you grasp the Apostolic explanation of the bare facts—seeing in Him the Word who became flesh, the Son who died that we might receive the adoption of sons.

I would further point out that a clear conception of what the theme is, goes a long way to determine the method in which it shall be proclaimed. The Apostle says, in the passage

which is parallel to the present one, in the previous chapter, ‘We preach Christ crucified’; with strong emphasis on the word ‘preach.’ ‘The Jew required a sign’; he wanted a man who would do something. The Greek sought after wisdom; he wanted a man who would perorate and argue and dissertate. Paul says, ‘No!’ ‘We have nothing to *do*. We do not come to philosophise and to argue. We come with a message of fact that has occurred, of a Person that has lived.’ And, as most of you know, the word which he uses means in its full signification, ‘to proclaim as a herald does.’

Of course, if my business were to establish a set of principles, theological or otherwise, then argumentation would be my weapon, proofs would be my means, and my success would be that I should win your credence, your intellectual consent, and conviction. If I were here to proclaim simply a morality, then the thing that I would aim to secure would be obedience, and the method of securing it would be to enforce the authority and reasonableness of the command. But, seeing that my task is to proclaim a living Person and a historical fact, then the way to do that is to do as the herald does when in the market-place he stands, trumpet in one hand and the King's message in the other—proclaim it loudly, confidently, not ‘with bated breath and whispering humbleness,’ as if apologising, nor too much concerned to buttress it up with argumentation out of his own head, but to say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and to

what the Lord saith conscience says, ‘Amen.’ Brethren, we need far more, in all our pulpits, of that unhesitating confidence in the plain, simple proclamation, stripped, as far as possible, of human additions and accretions, of the great fact and the great Person on whom all our salvation depends.

II. So let me ask you to notice the exclusiveness which this theme demands.

‘Nothing but,’ says Paul. I might venture to say—though perhaps the tone of the personal allusions in this sermon may seem to contradict it—that this exclusiveness is to be manifested in one very difficult direction, and that that is, the herald shall efface himself. We have to hold up the picture; and if I might take such a metaphor, like a man in a gallery who is displaying some masterpiece to the eyes of the beholders, we have to keep ourselves well behind it; and it will be wise if not even a finger-tip is allowed to steal in front and come into sight. One condition, I believe, of real power in the ministration of the Gospel, is that people shall be convinced that the preacher is thinking not at all about himself, but altogether about his message. You remember that wonderfully pathetic utterance from John the Baptist's stern lips, which derives much additional pathos and tenderness from the character of the man from whom it came, when they asked him, ‘Who art thou?’ and his answer was, ‘I am a Voice.’ I am a Voice; that is all! Ah, that is the example! We

preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord. We must efface ourselves if we would proclaim Christ.

But I turn to another direction in which this theme demands exclusiveness, and I revert to the previous chapter where in the parallel portion to the words of my text, we find the Apostle very clearly conscious of the two great streams of expectation and wish which he deliberately thwarted and set at nought. 'The Jews require a sign—but we preach Christ crucified. The Greeks seek after wisdom,' but again, 'we preach Christ crucified.' Now, take these two. They are representations, in a very emphatic way, of two sets of desires and mental characteristics, which divide the world between them.

On the one hand, there is the sensuous tendency that wants something done for it, something to see, something that sense can grasp at; and so, as it fancies, work itself upwards into a higher region. 'The Jew requires a sign'—that is, not merely a miracle, but something to look at. He wants a visible sacrifice; he wants a priest. He wants religion to consist largely in the doing of certain acts which may be supposed to bring, in some magical fashion, spiritual blessings. And Paul opposes to that, 'We preach Christ crucified.' Brethren, the tendency is strong to-day, not only in those parts of the Anglican communion where sacramentarian theories are in favour, but

amongst all sections of the Christian Church, in which there is obvious a drift towards more ornate ritual, and aesthetic services, as means of attracting to church or chapel, and as more important than proclaiming Christ. I am free to confess that possibly some of us, with our Puritan upbringing and tendency, too much disregard that side of human nature. Possibly it is so. But for all that I profoundly believe that if religion is to be strong it must have a very, very small infusion of these external aids to spiritual worship, and that few things more weaken the power of the Gospel that Paul preached than the lowering of the flag in conformity with desires of men of sense, and substituting for the simple glory of the preached Word the meretricious, and in time impotent, and always corrupting, attractions of a sensuous worship.

Further, 'The Greeks seek after wisdom.' They wanted demonstration, abstract principles, systematised philosophies, and the like. Paul comes again with his 'We preach Christ and Him crucified.' The wisdom is there, as I shall have to say in a moment, but the form that it takes is directly antagonistic to the wishes of these wisdom-seeking Greeks. The same thing in modern guise besets us to-day. We are called upon, on all sides, to bring into the pulpit what they call an ethical gospel; putting it into plain English, to preach morality, and to leave out Christ. We are called upon, on all sides, to preach an applied Christianity, a social gospel—that is to say, largely to turn the pulpit into a

Sunday supplement to the daily newspaper. We are asked to deal with the intellectual difficulties which spring from the collision of science, true or false, with religion, and the like. All that is right enough. But I believe from my heart that the thing to do is to copy Paul's example, and to preach Christ and Him crucified. You may think me right or you may think me wrong, but here and now, at the end of forty years, I should like to say that I have for the most part ignored that class of subjects deliberately, and of set purpose, and with a profound conviction, be it erroneous or not, that a ministry which listens much to the cry for ‘wisdom’ in its modern forms, has departed from the true perspective of Christian teaching, and will weaken the churches which depend upon it. Let who will turn the pulpit into a professor's chair, or a lecturer's platform, or a concert-room stage or a politician's rostrum, I for one determine to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

III. Lastly, observe the all-sufficient comprehensiveness which this theme secures.

Paul says ‘nothing but’; he might have said ‘everything in.’ For ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified’ covers all the ground of men's needs. No doubt many of you will have been saying to yourselves whilst you have been listening, if you have been listening, to what I have been saying, ‘Ah! old-fashioned narrowness; quite out of date in this generation.’ Brethren, there are two ways of adapting one's ministry to the times. One is

falling in with the requirements of the times, and the other is going dead against them, and both of these methods have to be pursued by us.

But the exclusiveness of which I have been speaking, is no narrow exclusiveness. Paul felt that, if he was to give the Corinthians what they needed, he must refuse to give them what they wanted, and that whilst he crossed their wishes he was consulting their necessities. That is true yet, for the preaching that bases itself upon the life and death of Jesus Christ, conceived as Paul had learned from Jesus Christ to conceive them, that Gospel, whilst it brushes aside men's superficial wishes, goes straight to the heart of their deep-lying universal necessities, for what the Jew needs most is not a sign, and what the Greek needs most is not wisdom, but what they both need most is deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. And we all, scholars and fools, poets and common-place people, artists and ploughmen, all of us, in all conditions of life, in all varieties of culture, in all stages of intellectual development, in all diversities of occupation and of mental bias, what we all have in common is that human heart in which sin abides, and what we all need most to have is that evil drop squeezed out of it, and our souls delivered from the burden and the bondage. Therefore, any man that comes with a sign, and does not deal with the sin of the human heart, and any man that comes with a philosophical system of wisdom, and does not deal with sin, does not bring a Gospel that will meet the

necessities even of the people to whose cravings he has been aiming to adapt his message.

But, beyond that, in this message of Christ and Him crucified, there lies in germ the satisfaction of all that is legitimate in these desires that at first sight it seems to thwart. 'A sign?' Yes, and where is there power like the power that dwells in Him who is the Incarnate might of omnipotence? 'Wisdom?' Yes, and where is there wisdom, except 'in Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'? Let the Jew come to the Cross, and in the weak Man hanging there, he will find a mightier revelation of the power of God than anywhere else. Let the Greek come to the Cross, and there he will find wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The bases of all social, economical, political reform and well-being, lie in the understanding and the application to social and national life, of the principles that are wrapped in, and are deduced from, the Incarnation and the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We have not learned them all yet. They have not all been applied to national and individual life yet. I plead for no narrow exclusiveness, but for one consistent with the widest application of Christian principles to all life. Paul determined to know nothing but Jesus, and to know everything in Jesus, and Jesus in everything. Do not begin your building at the second-floor windows. Put in your foundations first, and be sure that they are well laid. Let the Sacrifice of Christ, in its application to the individual and

his sins, be ever the basis of all that you say. And then, when that foundation is laid, exhibit, to your heart's content, the applications of Christianity and its social aspects. But be sure that the beginning of them all is the work of Christ for the individual sinful soul, and the acceptance of that work by personal faith.

Dear friends, ours has been a long and happy union but it is a very solemn one. My responsibilities are great; yours are not small. Let me beseech you to ask yourselves if, with all your kindness to the messenger, you have given heed to the message. Have you passed beyond the voice that speaks, to Him of whom it speaks? Have you taken the truth—veiled and weakened as I know it has been by my words, but yet in them—for what it is, the word of the living God? My occupancy of this pulpit must in the nature of things, before long, come to a close, but the message which I have brought to you will survive all changes in the voice that speaks here. ‘All flesh is grass ... the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.’ And, closing these forty years, during a long part of which some of you have listened most lovingly and most forbearingly, I leave with you this, which I venture to quote, though it is my Master's word about Himself, ‘I judge you not; the word which I have spoken unto you, the same shall judge you in the last day.’

GOD'S FELLOW-WORKERS

> 'Labourers together with God.'—1 COR. iii. 9.

The characteristic Greek tendency to factions was threatening to rend the Corinthian Church, and each faction was swearing by a favourite teacher. Paul and his companion, Apollos, had been taken as the figureheads of two of these parties, and so he sets himself in the context, first of all to show that neither of the two was of any real importance in regard to the Church's life. They were like a couple of gardeners, one of whom did the planting, and the other the watering; but neither the man that put the little plant into the ground, nor the man that came after him with a watering-pot, had anything to do with originating the mystery of the life by which the plant grew. That was God's work, and the pair that had planted and watered were nothing. So what was the use of fighting which of two nothings was the greater?

But then he bethinks himself that that is not quite all. The man that plants and the man that waters are something after all. They do not communicate life, but they do provide for its nourishment. And more than that, the two operations—that of the man with the dibble and that of the man with the watering-pot—are one in issue; and so they are partners, and in some respects may be regarded as one. Then what is the sense of pitting them against each other?

But even that is not quite all; though united in operation, they are separate in responsibility and activity, and will be separate in reward. And even that is not all; for, being nothing and yet something, being united and yet separate, they are taken into participation and co-operation with God; and as my text puts it, in what is almost a presumptuous phrase, they are 'labourers together with Him.' That partnership of co-operation is not merely a partnership of the two, but it is a partnership of the three—God and the two who, in some senses, are one.

Now whilst this text is primarily spoken in regard to the apostolic and evangelistic work of these early teachers, the principle which it embodies is a very wide one, and it applies in all regions of life and activity, intellectual, scholastic, philanthropic, social. Where-ever men are thinking God's thoughts and trying to carry into effect any phase or side of God's manifold purposes of good and blessing to the world, there it is true. We claim no special or exclusive prerogative for the Christian teacher. Every man that is trying to make men understand God's thought, whether it is expressed in creation, or whether it is written in history, or whether it is carven in half-obliterated letters on the constitution of human nature, every man who, in any region of society or life, is seeking to effect the great designs of the universal loving Father—can take to himself, in the measure and according to the manner of his special activity, the great encouragement of

my text, and feel that he, too, in his little way, is a fellow-helper to the truth and a fellow-worker with God. But then, of course, according to New Testament teaching, and according to the realities of the case, the highest form in which men thus can co-operate with God, and carry into effect His purposes is that in which men devote themselves, either directly or indirectly, to spreading throughout the whole world the name and the power of the Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom all God's will is gathered, and through whom all God's blessings are communicated to mankind. So the thought of my text comes appropriately when I have to bring before you the claims of our missionary operations.

Now, the first way in which I desire to look at this great idea expressed in these words, is that we find in it

I. A solemn thought.

‘Labourers together with God.’ Cannot He do it all Himself? No. God needs men to carry out His purposes. True, on the Cross, Jesus spoke the triumphant word, ‘It is finished!’ He did not thereby simply mean that He had completed all His suffering; but He meant that He had then done all which the world needed to have done in order that it should be a redeemed world. But for the distribution and application of that finished work God depends on men. You all know, in your own daily businesses, how there must be a middleman between the mill and the

consumer. The question of organising a distributing agency is quite as important as any other part of the manufacturer's business. The great reservoir is full, but there has to be a system of irrigating-channels by which the water is carried into every corner of the field that is to be watered. Christian men individually, and the Church collectively, supply—may I call it the missing link?—between a redeeming Saviour and the world which He has redeemed in act, but which is not actually redeemed, until it has received the message of the great Redemption that is wrought. The supernatural is implanted in the very heart of the mass of leaven by the Incarnation and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ; but the spreading of that supernatural revelation is left in the hands of men who work through natural processes, and who thus become labourers together with God, and enable Christ to be to single souls, in blessed reality, what He is potentially to the world, and has been ever since. He died upon the Cross. ‘It is finished.’ Yes—because it is finished, our work begins.

Let me remind you of the profound symbolism in that incident where our Lord for once appeared conspicuously, and almost ostentatiously, before Israel as its true King. He had need—as He Himself said—of the meek beast on which He rode. He cannot pass, in His coronation procession, through the world unless He has us, by whom He may be carried into every corner of the earth. So ‘the Lord has need’ of us, and we are ‘fellow-labourers with Him.’

But this same thought suggests another point. We have here a solemn call addressed to every Christian man and woman.

Do not let us run away with the idea that, because here the Apostle is speaking in regard to himself and Apollos, he is enunciating a truth which applies only to Apostles and evangelists. It is true of all Christians. My knowledge of and faith in Jesus Christ as my own personal Saviour impose upon me the obligation, in so far as my opportunities and capacities extend, thus to co-operate with Him in spreading His great Name. Every Christian man, just because he is a Christian, is invested with the power—and power to its last particle is duty—and is, therefore, burdened with the honourable obligation to work for God. There is such a thing as 'coming to the help of the Lord,' though that phrase seems to reverse altogether the true relation. It is the duty of every Christian, partly because of loyalty to Jesus, and partly because of the responsibility which the very constitution of society lays upon every one of us, to diffuse what he possesses, and to be a distributing agent for the life that he himself enjoys. Brethren! there is no possibility of Christian men or women being fully faithful to the Saviour, unless they recognise that the duty of being a fellow-labourer with God inevitably follows on being a possessor of Christ's salvation; and that no Apostle, no official, no minister, no missionary, has any more necessity laid upon him to preach the Gospel, nor pulls down any heavier woe on

himself if he is unfaithful, than has and does each one of Christ's servants.

So ‘we are fellow-labourers with God.’ Alas! alas! how poorly the average Christian realises—I do not say discharges, but realises—that obligation! Brethren, I do not wish to find fault, but I do beseech you to ask yourselves whether, if you are Christians, you are doing anything the least like what my text contemplates as the duty of all Christians.

May I say a word or two with regard to another aspect of this solemn call? Does not the thought of working along with God prescribe for us the sort of work that we ought to do? We ought to work in God's fashion, and if we wish to know what God's fashion is, we have but to look at Jesus Christ. We ought to work in Jesus Christ's fashion. We all know what that involved of self-sacrifice, of pain, of weariness, of utter self-oblivious devotion, of gentleness, of tenderness, of infinite pity, of love running over. ‘The master's eye makes a good servant.’ The Master's hand working along with the servant ought to make the servant work after the Master's fashion. ‘As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you.’ If we felt that side by side with us, like two sailors hauling on one rope, ‘the Servant of the Lord’ was toiling, do you not think it would burn up all our selfishness, and light up all our indifference, and make us spend ourselves in His service? A fellow-labourer with God will surely never be lazy and selfish. Thus

my text has in it, to begin with, a solemn call.

It suggests

II. A signal honour.

Suppose a great painter, a Raphael or a Turner, taking a little boy that cleaned his brushes, and saying to him, ‘Come into my studio, and I will let you do a bit of work upon my picture.’ Suppose an aspirant, an apprentice in any walk of life, honoured by being permitted to work along with some one who was recognised all over the world as being at the very top of that special profession. Would it not be a feather in the boy's cap all his life? And would he not think it the greatest honour that ever had been done him that he was allowed to co-operate, in however inferior a fashion, with such an one? Jesus Christ says to us, ‘Come and work here side by side with Me,’ But Christian men, plenty of them, answer, ‘It is a perpetual nuisance, this continual application for money! money! money! work! work! work! It is never-ending, and it is a burden!’ Yes, it is a burden, just because it is an honour. Do you know that the Hebrew word which means ‘glory’ literally means ‘weight’? There is a great truth in that. You cannot get true honours unless you are prepared to carry them as burdens. And the highest honour that Jesus Christ gives to men when He says to them, not only ‘Go work to-day in My vineyard,’ but ‘Come, work here side by side with Me,’ is a heavy weight which can only

be lightened by a cheerful heart.

Is it not the right way to look at all the various forms of Christian activity which are made imperative upon Christian people, by their possession of Christianity as being tokens of Christ's love to us? Do you remember that this same Apostle said, ‘Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ?’ He could speak about burdens and heavy tasks, and being ‘persecuted but not forsaken,’ almost crushed down and yet not in despair, and about the weights that came upon him daily, ‘the care of all the churches,’ but far beneath all the sense of his heavy load lay the thrill of thankful wonder that to him, of all men in the world, knowing as he did better than anybody else could do his own imperfection and insufficiency, this distinguishing honour had been bestowed, that he was made the Apostle to the Gentiles. That is the way in which the true man will always look at what the selfish man, and the half-and-half Christian, look at as being a weight and a weariness, or a disagreeable duty, which is to be done as perfunctorily as possible. One question that a great many who call themselves Christians ask is, ‘With how little service can I pass muster?’ Ah, it is because we have so little of the Spirit of Christ in us that we feel burdened by His command, ‘Go ye into all the world,’ as being so heavy; and that so many of us—I leave you to judge if you are in the class—so many of us make it criminally light if we do not ignore it

altogether. I believe that, if it were possible to conceive of the duty and privilege of spreading Christ's name in the world being withdrawn from the Church, all His real servants would soon be yearning to have it back again. It is a token of His love; it is a source of infinite blessings to ourselves; ‘if the house be not worthy, your peace shall return to you again.’

And now, lastly, we have suggested by this text

III. A strong encouragement.

‘Fellow-labourers with God’—then, God is a Fellow-labourer with us. The co-operation works both ways, and no man who is seeking to spread that great salvation, to distribute that great wealth, to irrigate some little corner of the field by some little channel that he has dug, needs to feel that he is labouring alone. If I am working with God, God is working with me. Do you remember that most striking picture which is drawn in the verses appended to Mark's Gospel, which tells how the universe seemed parted into two halves, and up above in the serene the Lord ‘sat on the right hand of God,’ while below, in the murky and obscure, ‘they went everywhere preaching the Word.’ The separation seems complete, but the two halves are brought together by the next word—‘The Lord also,’ sitting up yonder, ‘working with them’ the wandering preachers down here, ‘confirming the words with signs following.’ Ascended on high,

entered into His rest, having finished His work, He yet is working with us, if we are labourers together with God. If we turn to the last book of Scripture, which draws back the curtain from the invisible world which is all filled with the glorified Christ, and shows its relations to the earthly militant church, we read no longer of a Christ enthroned in apparent ease, but of a Christ walking amidst the candlesticks, and of a Lamb standing in the midst of the Throne, and opening the seals, launching forth into the world the sequences of the world's history, and of the Word of God charging His enemies on His white horse, and behind Him the armies of God following. The workers who labour with God have the ascended Christ labouring with them.

But if God works with us, success is sure. Then comes the old question that Gideon asked with bitterness of heart, when he was threshing out his handful of wheat in a corner to avoid the oppressors, ‘If the Lord be with us, wherefore is all this come upon us? Will any one say that the progress of the Gospel in the world has been at the rate which its early believers expected, or at the rate which its own powers warranted them to expect? Certainly not. And so it comes to this, that whilst every true labourer has God working with him, and therefore success is certain, the planter and the waterer can delay the growth of the plant by their unfaithfulness, by not expecting success, by not so working as to make it likely, or by neutralising their evangelistic efforts by their worldly lives. When Jesus Christ

was on earth, it is recorded, 'He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief, save that He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them.' A faithless Church, a worldly Church, a lazy Church, an unspiritual Church, an un-Christlike Church—which, to a large extent, is the designation of the so-called Church of to day—can clog His chariot-wheels, can thwart the work, can hamper the Divine Worker. If the Christians of Manchester were revived, they could win Manchester for Jesus. If the Christians of England lived their Christianity, they could make England what it never has been but in name—a Christian country. If the Church universal were revived, it could win the world. If the single labourer, or the community of such, is labouring 'in the Lord,' their labour will not be in vain; and if they thus plant and water, God will give the increase.

THE TESTING FIRE

> 'Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble: 13. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.'—1 COR. iii. 12, 13.

Before I enter upon the ideas which the words

suggest, my exegetical conscience binds me to point out that the original application of the text is not exactly that which I purpose to make of it now. The context shows that the Apostle is thinking about the special subject of Christian teachers and their work, and that the builders of whom he speaks are the men in the Corinthian Church, some of them his allies and some of them his rivals, who were superimposing upon the foundation of the preaching of Jesus Christ other doctrines and principles. The 'wood, hay, stubble' are the vapid and trivial doctrines which the false teachers were introducing into the Church. The 'gold, silver, and precious stones' are the solid and substantial verities which Paul and his friends were proclaiming. And it is about these, and not about the Christian life in the general, that the tremendous metaphors of my text are uttered.

But whilst that is true, the principles involved have a much wider range than the one case to which the Apostle applies them. And, though I may be slightly deflecting the text from its original direction, I am not doing violence to it, if I take it as declaring some very plain and solemn truths applicable to all Christian people, in their task of building up a life and character on the foundation of Jesus Christ; truths which are a great deal too much forgotten in our modern popular Christianity, and which it concerns us all very clearly to keep in view. There are three things here that I wish to say a word about—the patchwork building, the testing

fire, the fate of the builders.

I. First, the patchwork structure.

'If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.' In the original application of the metaphor, Paul is thinking of all these teachers in that church at Corinth as being engaged in building the one structure—I venture to deflect here, and to regard each of us as rearing our own structure of life and character on the foundation of the preached and accepted Christ.

Now, what the Apostle says is that these builders were, some of them, laying valuable things like gold and silver and costly stones—by which he does not mean jewels, but marbles, alabasters, polished porphyry or granite, and the like; sumptuous building materials, which were employed in great palaces or temples—and that some of them were bringing timber, hay, stubble, reeds gathered from the marshes or the like, and filling in with such trash as that. That is a picture of what a great many Christian people are doing in their own lives—the same man building one course of squared and solid and precious stones, and topping them with rubbish. You will see in the walls of Jerusalem, at the base, five or six courses of those massive blocks which are the wonders of the world yet; well jointed, well laid, well cemented, and then on the top of them a mass of poor stuff, heaped together anyhow; scamped work—may I use a

modern vulgarism?—'jerry-building.' You may go to some modern village, on an ancient historic site, and you will find built into the mud walls of the hovels in which the people are living, a marble slab with fair carving on it, or the drum of a great column of veined marble, and on the top of that, timber and clay mixed together.

That is the type of the sort of life that hosts of Christian people are living. For, mark, all the builders are on the foundation. Paul is not speaking about mere professed Christians who had no faith at all in them, and no real union with Jesus Christ. These builders were 'on the foundation'; they were building on the foundation, there was a principle deep down in their lives—which really lay at the bottom of their lives—and yet had not come to such dominating power as to mould and purify and make harmonious with itself the life that was reared upon it. We all know that that is the condition of many men, that they have what really are the fundamental bases of their lives, in belief and aim and direction; and which yet are not strong enough to master the whole of the life, and to manifest themselves through it. Especially it is the condition of some Christian people. They have a real faith, but it is of the feeblest and most rudimentary kind. They are on the foundation, but their lives are interlaced with the most heterogeneous mixty-maxty of good and evil, of lofty, high, self-sacrificing thoughts and heavenward aspirations, of

resolutions never carried out into practice; and side by side with these there shall be meannesses, selfishnesses, tempers, dispositions all contradictory of the former impulses. One moment they are all fire and love, the next moment ice and selfishness. One day they are all for God, the next day all for the world, the flesh, and the devil. Jacob sees the open heavens and the face of God and vows; to-morrow he meets Laban and drops to shifty ways. Peter leaves all and follows his Master, and in a little while the fervour has gone, and the fire has died down into grey ashes, and a flippant servant-girl's tongue leads him to say 'I know not the man.' 'Gold, silver, precious stones,' and topping them, 'wood, hay, stubble!'

The inconsistencies of the Christian life are what my text, in the application that I am venturing to make of it, suggests to us. Ah, dear friends! we do not need to go to Jacob and Peter; let us look at our own hearts, and if we will honestly examine one day of our lives, I think we shall understand how it is possible for a man, on the foundation, yet to build upon it these worthless and combustible things, 'wood, hay, stubble.'

We are not to suppose that one man builds *only* 'gold, silver, precious stones.' There is none of us that does that. And we are not to suppose that any man who *is* on the foundations has so little grasp of it, as that he builds *only* 'wood, hay, stubble.'

There is none of us who has not intermingled his building, and there is none of us, if we are Christians at all, who has not sometimes laid a course of ‘precious stones.’ If your faith is doing *nothing* for you except bringing to you a belief that you are not going to hell when you die, then it is no faith at all. ‘Faith without works is dead.’ So there is a mingling in the best, and—thank God!—there is a mingling of good with evil, in the worst of real Christian people.

II. Note here, the testing fire.

Paul points to two things, the day and the fire.

‘The day shall declare it,’ that is the day on which Jesus Christ comes to be the Judge; and it, that is ‘the day,’ ‘shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall test every man's work.’ Now, it is to be noticed that here we are moving altogether in the region of lofty symbolism, and that the metaphor of the testing fire is suggested by the previous enumeration of building materials, gold and silver being capable of being assayed by flame; and ‘wood, hay, stubble’ being combustible, and sure to be destroyed thereby. The fire here is not an emblem of punishment; it is not an emblem of cleansing. There is no reference to anything in the nature of what Roman Catholics call purgatorial fires. The allusion is simply to some stringent and searching means of testing the quality of a man's work, and of revealing that quality.

So then, we come just to this, that for people

‘on the foundation,’ there is a Day of revelation and testing of their life's work. It is a great misfortune that so-called Evangelical Christianity does not say as much as the New Testament says about the judgment that is to be passed on ‘the house of God.’ People seem to think that the great doctrine of salvation, ‘not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy,’ is, somehow or other, interfered with when we proclaim, as Paul proclaims, speaking to Christian people, ‘We must be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ,’ and declares that ‘Every man will receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.’ Paul saw no contradiction, and there is no contradiction. But a great many professing Christians seem to think that the great blessing of their salvation by faith is, that they are exempt from that future revelation and testing and judgment of their acts. That is not the New Testament teaching. But, on the contrary, ‘Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,’ was originally said to a church of Christian people. And here we come full front against that solemn truth, that the Lord will ‘gather together His saints, those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, that He may judge His people.’ Never mind about the drapery, the symbolism, the expression in material forms with which that future judgment is arranged, in order that we may the more easily grasp it. Remember that these pictures in the New Testament of a future judgment are

highly symbolical, and not to be interpreted as if they were plain prose; but also remember that the heart of them is this, that there comes for Christian people as for all others, a time when the light will shine down upon their past, and will flash its rays into the dark chambers of memory, and when men will—to themselves if not to others—be revealed 'in the day when the Lord shall judge the secrets of men according to my Gospel.'

We have all experience enough of how but a few years, a change of circumstances, or a growth into another stage of development, give us fresh eyes with which to estimate the moral quality of our past. Many a thing, which we thought to be all right at the time when we did it, looks to us now very questionable and a plain mistake. And when we shift our stations to up yonder, and get rid of all this blinding medium of flesh and sense, and have the issues of our acts in our possession, and before our sight—ah! we shall think very differently of a great many things from what we think of them now. Judgment will begin at the house of God.

And there is the other thought, that the fire which reveals and tests has also in it a power of destruction. Gold and silver will lose no atom of their weight, and will be brightened into greater lustre as they flash back the beams. The timber and the stubble will go up in a flare, and die down into black ashes. That is highly metaphorical, of course. What does it mean? It

means that some men's work will be crumpled up and perish, and be as of none effect, leaving a great, black sorrowful gap in the continuity of the structure, and that other men's work will stand. Everything that we do is, in one sense, immortal, because it is represented in our final character and condition, just as a thin stratum of rock will represent forests of ferns that grew for one summer millenniums ago, or clouds of insects that danced for an hour in the sun. But whilst that is so, and nothing human ever dies, on the other hand, deeds which have been in accordance, as it were, with the great stream that sweeps the universe on its bosom will float on that surface and never sink. Acts which have gone against the rush of God's will through creation will be like a child's go-cart that comes against the engine of an express train—be reduced, first, to stillness, all the motion knocked out of them, and then will be crushed to atoms. Deeds which stand the test will abide in blessed issue for the doer, and deeds which do not will pass away in smoke, and leave only ashes. Some of us, building on the foundation, have built more rubbish than solid work, and that will be

'Cast as rubbish to the void
When God has made the pile complete.'

III. So, lastly, we have here the fate of the two builders.

The one man gets wages. That is not the bare

notion of salvation, for both builders are conceived of as on the foundation, and both are saved. He gets wages. Yes, of course! The architect has to give his certificate before the builder gets his cheque. The weaver, who has been working his hand-loom at his own house, has to take his web to the counting-house and have it overlooked before he gets his pay. And the man who has built 'gold, silver, precious stones,' will have—over and above the initial salvation—in himself the blessed consequences, and unfold the large results, of his faithful service; while the other man, inasmuch as he has not such work, cannot have the consequences of it, and gets no wages; or at least his pay is subject to heavy deductions for the spoiled bits in the cloth, and for the gaps in the wall.

The Apostle employs a tremendous metaphor here, which is masked in our Authorised Version, but is restored in the Revised. 'He shall be saved, yet so as' (not 'by' but) 'through fire'; the picture being that of a man surrounded by a conflagration, and making a rush through the flames to get to a place of safety. Paul says that he will get through, because down *below* all inconsistency and worldliness, there was a little of that which ought to have been *above* all the inconsistency and the worldliness—a true faith in Jesus Christ. But because it was so imperfect, so feeble, so little operative in his life as that it could not keep him from piling up inconsistencies into his wall, therefore his salvation is so as through the fire.

Brethren, I dare not enlarge upon that great metaphor. It is meant for us professing Christians, real and imperfect Christians—it is meant for us; and it just tells us that there are degrees in that future blessedness proportioned to present faithfulness. We begin there where we left off here. That future is not a dead level; and they who have earnestly striven to work out their faith into their lives shall 'summer high upon the hills of God.' One man, like Paul in his shipwreck, shall lose ship and lading, though 'on broken pieces of the ship' he may 'escape safe to land'; and another shall make the harbour with full cargo of works of faith, to be turned into gold when he lands. If we build, as we all may, 'on that foundation, gold and silver and precious stones,' an entrance 'shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'; whilst if we bring a preponderance of 'wood, hay, stubble,' we shall be 'saved, yet so as through the fire.'

TEMPLES OF GOD

> 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?'—1 COR. iii. 16

The great purpose of Christianity is to make men like Jesus Christ. As He is the image of the invisible God we are to be the images of the unseen Christ. The Scripture is very bold and

emphatic in attributing to Christ's followers likeness to Him, in nature, in character, in relation to the world, in office, and in ultimate destiny. Is He the anointed of God? We are anointed—Christs in Him. Is He the Son of God? We in Him receive the adoption of sons. Is He the Light of the world? We in Him are lights of the world too. Is He a King? A Priest? He hath made us to be kings and priests.

Here we have the Apostle making the same solemn assertion in regard to Christian men, 'Know ye not that ye are'—as your Master, and because your Master is—'that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?'

Of course the allusion in my text is to the whole aggregate of believers—what we call the Catholic Church, as being collectively the habitation of God. But God cannot dwell in an aggregate of men, unless He dwells in the individuals that compose the aggregate. And God has nothing to do with institutions except through the people who make the institutions. And so, if the Church as a whole is a Temple, it is only because all its members are temples of God.

Therefore, without forgetting the great blessed lesson of the unity of the Church which is taught in these words, I want rather to deal with them in their individual application now; and to try and lay upon your consciences, dear brethren,

the solemn obligations and the intense practical power which this Apostle associated with the thought that each Christian man was, in very deed, a temple of God.

It would be very easy to say eloquent things about this text, but that is no part of my purpose.

I. Let me deal, first of all, and only for a moment or two, with the underlying thought that is here—that every Christian is a dwelling-place of God.

Now, do not run away with the idea that that is a metaphor. It was the outward temple that was the metaphor. The reality is that which you and I, if we are God's children in Jesus Christ, experience. There was no real sense in which that Mighty One whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, dwelt in any house made with hands. But the Temple, and all the outward worship, were but symbolical of the facts of the Christian life, and the realities of our inward experience. These are the truths whereof the other is the shadow. We use words to which it is difficult for us to attach any meaning, when we talk about God as being locally present in any material building; but we do not use words to which it is so difficult to attach a meaning, when we talk about the Infinite Spirit as being present and abiding in a spirit shaped to hold Him, and made on purpose to touch Him and be filled by Him.

All creatures have God dwelling in them in the measure of their capacity. The stone that you kick on the road would not be there if there were not a present God. Nothing would happen if there were not abiding in creatures the force, at any rate, which is God. But just as in this great atmosphere in which we all live and move and have our being, the eye discerns undulations which make light, and the ear catches vibrations which make sound, and the nostrils are recipient of motions which bring fragrance, and all these are in the one atmosphere, and the sense that apprehends one is utterly unconscious of the other, so God's creatures, each through some little narrow slit, and in the measure of their capacity, get a straggling beam from Him into their being, and therefore they are.

But high above all other ways in which creatures can lie patent to God, and open for the influx of a Divine Indweller, lies the way of faith and love. Whosoever opens his heart in these divinely-taught emotions, and fixes them upon the Christ in whom God dwells, receives into the very roots of his being—as the water that trickles through the soil to the rootlets of the tree—the very Godhead Himself. ‘He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.’

That God shall dwell in my heart is possible only from the fact that He dwelt in all His fulness in Christ, through whom I touch Him. That Temple consecrates all heart-shrines; and all worshippers that keep near to Him, partake

with Him of the Father that dwelt in Him.

Only remember that in Christ God dwelt completely, all 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily' was there, but in us it is but partially; that in Christ, therefore, the divine indwelling was uniform and invariable, but in us it fluctuates, and sometimes is more intimate and blessed, and sometimes He leaves the habitation when we leave Him; that in Christ, therefore, there was no progress in the divine indwelling, but that in us, if there be any true inhabitation of our souls by God, that abiding will become more and more, until every corner of our being is hallowed and filled with the searching effulgence of the all-pervasive Light. And let us remember that God dwelt in Christ, but that in us it is God in Christ who dwells. So to Him we owe it all, that our poor hearts are made the dwelling-place of God; or, as this Apostle puts it, in other words conveying the same idea, 'Ye are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth ... for a habitation of God through the Spirit.'

II. Now then, turning from this underlying idea of the passage, let us look, for a moment, at some of the many applications of which the great thought is susceptible. I remark, then, in the second place, that as temples all Christians are to be manifesters of God.

The meaning of the Temple as of all temples was, that there the indwelling Deity should reveal Himself; and if it be true that we Christian men and women are, in this deep and blessed reality of which I have been speaking, the abiding places and habitations of God, then it follows that we shall stand in the world as the great means by which God is manifested and made known, and that in a two-fold way; *to ourselves* and *to other people*.

The real revelation of God to our hearts must be His abiding in our hearts. We do not learn God until we possess God. He must fill our souls before we know His sweetness. The answer that our Lord made to one of His disciples is full of the deepest truth. 'How is it,' said one of them in his blundering way, 'how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us?' And the answer was, 'We will come and make Our abode with him.' You do not know God until, if I might so say, He sits at your fireside and talks with you in your hearts. Just as some wife may have a husband whom the world knows as hero, or sage, or orator, but she knows him as nobody else can; so the outside, and if I may so say, the public character of God is but the surface of the revelation that He makes to us, when in the deepest secrecy of our own hearts He pours Himself into our waiting spirits. O brethren! it is within the curtains of the Holiest of all that the Shekinah flashes; it is within our own hearts, shrined and templed there, that God reveals Himself to us, as He does not unto the world.

And then, further, Christian men, as the temples and habitations of God, are appointed to be the great means of making Him known to the world around. The eye that cannot look at the sun can look at the rosy clouds that lie on either side of it, and herald its rising; their opalescent tints and pearly lights are beautiful to dim vision, to which the sun itself is too bright to be looked upon. Men will believe in a gentle Christ when they see you gentle. They will believe in a righteous love when they see it manifesting itself in you. You are 'the secretaries of God's praise,' as George Herbert has it. He dwells in your hearts that out of your lives He may be revealed. The pictures in a book of travels, or the diagrams in a mathematical work, tell a great deal more in half a dozen lines than can be put into as many pages of dry words. And it is not books of theology nor eloquent sermons, but it is a Church glowing with the glory of God, and manifestly all flushed with His light and majesty, that will have power to draw men to believe in the God whom it reveals. When explorers land upon some untravelled island and meet the gentle inhabitants with armlets of rough gold upon their wrists, they say there must be many a gold-bearing rock of quartz crystal in the interior of the land. And if you present yourselves, Christian men and women, to the world with the likeness of your Master plain upon you, then people will believe in the Christianity that you profess. You have to popularise the Gospel in the fashion in which go-betweens and middlemen

between students and the populace popularise science. You have to make it possible for men to believe in the Christ because they see Christ in you. ‘Know ye not that ye are the temples of the living God?’ Let His light shine from you.

III. I remark again that as temples all Christian lives should be places of sacrifice.

What is the use of a temple without worship? And what kind of worship is that in which the centre point is not an altar? That is the sort of temple that a great many professing Christians are. They have forgotten the altar in their spiritual architecture. Have you got one in your heart? It is but a poor, half-furnished sanctuary that has not. Where is yours? The key and the secret of all noble life is to yield up one's own will, to sacrifice oneself. There never was anything done in this world worth doing, and there never will be till the end of time, of which sacrifice is not the centre and inspiration. And the difference between all other and lesser nobilities of life, and the supreme beauty of a true Christian life is that the sacrifice of the Christian is properly a *sacrifice*—that is, an offering to *God*, done for the sake of the great love wherewith He has loved us. As Christ is the one true Temple, and we become so by partaking of Him, so He is the one Sacrifice for sins for ever, and we become sacrifices only through Him. If there be any lesson which comes out of this great truth of Christians as temples, it is not a lesson of pluming ourselves on our

dignity, or losing ourselves in the mysticisms which lie near this truth, but it is the hard lesson —If a temple, then an altar; if an altar, then a sacrifice. 'Ye are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, that ye may offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God'—sacrifice, priest, temple, all in one; and all for the sake and by the might of that dear Lord who has given Himself a bleeding Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, that we might offer a Eucharistic sacrifice of thanks and praise and self-surrender unto Him, and to His Father God.

IV. And, lastly, this great truth of my text enforces the solemn lesson of the necessary sanctity of the Christian life.

'The temple of God,' says the context, 'the temple of God is holy, which (holy persons) ye are.' The plain first idea of the temple is a place set apart and consecrated to God.

Hence, of course, follows the idea of purity, but the parent idea of 'holiness' is not purity, which is the consequence, but consecration or separation to God, which is the root.

And so in very various applications, on which I have not time to dwell now, this idea of the necessary sanctity of the Temple is put forth in these two letters to the Corinthian Church. Corinth was a city honeycombed with the grossest immoralities; and hence, perhaps, to some extent the great emphasis and earnestness and even severity of the Apostle in dealing with

some forms of evil.

But without dwelling on the details, let me just point you to three directions in which this general notion of sanctity is applied. There is that of our context here 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? If any man *destroy* the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, and such ye are.'

He is thinking here mainly, I suppose, about the devastation and destruction of this temple of God, which was caused by schismatical and heretical teaching, and by the habit of forming parties, 'one of Paul, one of Apollos, one of Cephas, one of Christ,' which was rending that Corinthian Church into pieces. But we may apply it more widely than that, and say that anything which corrupts and defiles the Christian life and the Christian character assumes a darker tint of evil when we think that it is sacrilege—the profanation of the temple, the pollution of that which ought to be pure as He who dwells in it.

Christian men and women, how that thought darkens the blackness of all sin! How solemnly there peals out the warning, 'If any man destroy or impair the temple,' by any form of pollution, 'him' with retribution in kind, 'him shall God destroy.' Keep the temple clear; keep it clean. Let Him come with His scourge of small cords and His merciful rebuke. You Manchester men know what it is to let the money-changers into

the sanctuary. Beware lest, beginning with making your hearts ‘houses of merchandise,’ you should end by making them ‘dens of thieves.’

And then, still further, there is another application of this same principle, in the second of these Epistles. ‘What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?’ ‘Ye are the temple of the living God.’

Christianity is intolerant. There is to be one image in the shrine. One of the old Roman Stoic Emperors had a pantheon in his palace with Jesus Christ upon one pedestal and Plato on the one beside Him. And some of us are trying the same kind of thing. Christ there, and somebody else here. Remember, Christ must be everything or nothing! Stars may be sown by millions, but for the earth there is one sun. And you and I are to shrine one dear Guest, and one only, in the inmost recesses of our hearts.

And there is another application of this metaphor also in our letter. ‘Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?’ Christianity despises ‘the flesh’; Christianity reverences the body; and would teach us all that, being robed in that most wonderful work of God's hands, which becomes a shrine for God Himself if He dwell in our hearts, all purity, all chastisement and subjugation of animal passion is our duty. Drunkenness, and gluttony, lusts of every kind, impurity of conduct, and impurity of word and

look and thought, all these assume a still darker tint when they are thought of as not only crimes against the physical constitution and the moral law of humanity, but insults flung in the face of the God that would inhabit the shrine.

And in regard to sins of this kind, which it is so difficult to speak of in public, and which grow unchecked in secrecy, and are ruining hundreds of young lives, the words of this context are grimly true, 'If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.' I speak now mainly in brotherly or fatherly warning to young men—did you ever read this, 'His bones are full of the iniquities of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust'? 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?'

And so, brethren, our text tells us what we may all be. There is no heart without its deity. Alas! alas! for the many listening to me now whose spirits are like some of those Egyptian temples, which had in the inmost shrine a coiled-up serpent, the mummy of a monkey, or some other form as animal and obscene.

Oh! turn to Christ and cry, 'Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy strength.' Open your hearts and let Christ come in. And before Him, as of old, the bestial Dagon will be found, dejected and truncated, lying on the sill there; and all the vain, cruel, lustful gods that have held riot and carnival in your hearts will flee away into the darkness, like some foul

ghosts at cock-crow. ‘If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in.’ And the glory of the Lord shall fill the house.

DEATH, THE FRIEND

> ‘... All things are yours ... death.’—1 COR. iii. 21, 22.

What Jesus Christ is to a man settles what everything else is to Him. Our relation to Jesus determines our relation to the universe. If we belong to Him, everything belongs to us. If we are His servants, all things are our servants. The household of Jesus, which is the whole Creation, is not divided against itself, and the fellow-servants do not beat one another. Two bodies moving in the same direction, and under the impulse of the same force, cannot come into collision, and since ‘all things work together,’ according to the counsel of His will, ‘all things work together for good’ to His lovers. The triumphant words of my text are no piece of empty rhetoric, but the plain result of two facts —Christ's rule and the Christian's submission. ‘All things are yours, and ye are Christ's,’ so the stars in their courses fight against those who fight against Him, and if we are at peace with Him we shall ‘make a league with the beasts of the field, and the stones of the field,’ which otherwise would be hindrances and stumbling-

blocks, ‘shall be at peace with’ us.

The Apostle carries his confidence in the subservience of all things to Christ's servants very far, and the words of my text, in which he dares to suggest that ‘the Shadow feared of man’ is, after all, a veiled friend, are hard to believe, when we are brought face to face with death, either when we meditate on our own end, or when our hearts are sore and our hands are empty. Then the question comes, and often is asked with tears of blood, Is it true that this awful force, which we cannot command, does indeed serve us? Did it serve those whom it dragged from our sides; and in serving them, did it serve us? Paul rings out his ‘Yes’; and if we have as firm a hold of Paul's Lord as Paul had, our answer will be the same. Let me, then, deal with this great thought that lies here, of the conversion of the last enemy into a friend, the assurance that we may all have that death is ours, though not in the sense that we can command it, yet in the sense that it ministers to our highest good.

That thought may be true about ourselves when it comes to our turn to die, and, thank God, has been true about all those who have departed in His faith and fear. Some of you may have seen two very striking engravings by a great, though somewhat unknown artist, representing Death as the Destroyer, and Death as the Friend. In the one case he comes into a scene of wild revelry, and there at his feet lie,

stark and stiff, corpses in their gay clothing and with garlands on their brows, and feasters and musicians are flying in terror from the cowled Skeleton. In the other he comes into a quiet church belfry, where an aged saint sits with folded arms and closed eyes, and an open Bible by his side, and endless peace upon the wearied face. The window is flung wide to the sunrise, and on its sill perches a bird that gives forth its morning song. The cowled figure has brought rest to the weary, and the glad dawning of a new life to the aged, and is a friend. The two pictures are better than all the poor words that I can say. It depends on the people to whom he comes, whether he comes as a destroyer or as a helper. Of course, for all of us the mere physical facts remain the same, the pangs and the pain, the slow torture of the loosing of the bond, or the sharp agony of its instantaneous rending apart. But we have gone but a very little way into life and its experiences, if we have not learnt that identity of circumstances may cover profound difference of essentials, and that the same experiences may have wholly different messages and meanings to two people who are equally implicated in them. Thus, while the physical fact remains the same for all, the whole bearing of it may so differ that Death to one man will be a Destroyer, while to another it is a Friend.

For, if we come to analyse the thoughts of humanity about the last act in human life on earth, what is it that makes the dread darkness of death, which all men know, though they so

seldom think of it? I suppose, first of all, if we seek to question our feelings, that which makes Death a foe to the ordinary experience is, that it is like a step off the edge of a precipice in a fog; a step into a dim condition of which the imagination can form no conception, because it has no experience, and all imagination's pictures are painted with pigments drawn from our past. Because it is impossible for a man to have any clear vision of what it is that is coming to meet him, and he cannot tell 'in that sleep what dreams may come,' he shrinks, as we all shrink, from a step into the vast Inane, the dim Unknown. But the Gospel comes and says, 'It *is* a land of great darkness,' but 'To the people that sit in darkness a great light hath shined.'

'Our knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim.'

But faith has an eye, and there is light, and this we can see—One face whose brightness scatters all the gloom, One Person who has not ceased to be the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His beams, even in the darkness of the grave. Therefore, one at least of the repellent features which, to the timorous heart, makes Death a foe, is gone, when we know that the known Christ fills the Unknown.

Then, again, another of the elements, as I suppose, which constitute the hostile aspect that Death assumes to most of us, is that it apparently hales us away from all the

wholesome activities and occupations of life, and bans us into a state of apparent inaction. The thought that death is rest does sometimes attract the weary or harassed, or they fancy it does, but that is a morbid feeling, and much more common in sentimental epitaphs than among the usual thoughts of men. To most of us there is no joy, but a chill, in the anticipation that all the forms of activity which have so occupied, and often enriched, our lives here, are to be cut off at once. 'What am I to do if I have no books?' says the student. 'What am I to do if I have no mill?' says the spinner. 'What am I to do if I have no nursery or kitchen?' say the women. What are you to do? There is only one quieting answer to such questions. It tells us that what we are doing here is learning our trade, and that we are to be moved into another workshop there, to practise it. Nothing can bereave us of the force we made our own, being here; and 'there is nobler work for us to do' when the Master of all the servants stoops from His Throne and says: 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; have thou authority over ten cities.' Then the faithfulness of the steward will be exchanged for the authority of the ruler, and the toil of the servant for a share in the joy of the Lord.

So another of the elements which make Death an enemy is turned into an element which makes it a friend, and instead of the separation from this earthly body, the organ of our activity and the medium of our connection with the

external universe being the condemnation of the naked spirit to inaction, it is the emancipation of the spirit into greater activity. For nothing drops away at death that does not make a man the richer for its loss, and when the dross is purged from the silver, there remains ‘a vessel unto honour, fit for the Master's use.’ This mightier activity is the contribution to our blessedness, which Death makes to them who use their activities here in Christ's service.

Then, still further, another of the elements which is converted from being a terror into a joy is that Death, the separator, becomes to Christ's servants Death, the uniter. We all know how that function of death is perhaps the one that makes us shrink from it the most, dread it the most, and sometimes hate it the most. But it will be with us as it was with those who were to be initiated into ancient religious rites. Blindfolded, they were led by a hand that grasped theirs but was not seen, through dark, narrow, devious passages, but they were led into a great company in a mighty hall. Seen from this side, the ministry of Death parts a man from dear ones, but, oh! if we could see round the turn in the corridor, we should see that the solitude is but for a moment, and that the true office of Death is not so much to part from those beloved on earth as to carry to, and unite with, Him that is best Beloved in the heavens, and in Him with all His saints. They that are joined to Christ, as they who pass from earth are joined, are thereby joined to all who, in like manner, are knit to

Him. Although other dear bonds are loosed by the bony fingers of the Skeleton, his very loosing of them ties more closely the bond that unites us to Jesus, and when the dull ear of the dying has ceased to hear the voices of earth that used to thrill it in their lowest whisper, I suppose it hears another Voice that says: 'When thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, and through the waters they shall not overflow thee.' Thus the Separator unites, first to Jesus, and then to 'the general assembly and Church of the first-born,' and leads into the city of the living God, the pilgrims who long have lived, often isolated, in the desert.

There is a last element in Death which is changed for the Christian, and that is that to men generally, when they think about it, there is an instinctive recoil from Death, because there is an instinctive suspicion that after Death is the Judgment, and that, somehow or other—never mind about the drapery in which the idea may be embodied for our weakness—when a man dies he passes to a state where he will reap the consequences of what he has sown here. But to Christ's servant that last thought is robbed of its sting, and all the poison sucked out of it, for he can say: 'He that died for me makes it possible for me to die undreading, and to pass thither, knowing that I shall meet as my Judge Him whom I have trusted as my Saviour, and so may have boldness before Him in the Day of Judgment.'

Knit these four contrasts together. Death as a step into a dim unknown *versus* Death as a step into a region lighted by Jesus; Death as the cessation of activity *versus* Death as the introduction to nobler opportunities, and the endowment with nobler capacities of service; Death as the separator and isolator *versus* Death as uniting to Jesus and all His lovers; Death as haling us to the judgment-seat of the adversary *versus* Death as bringing us to the tribunal of the Christ; and I think we can understand how Christians can venture to say, 'All things are ours, whether life or death' which leads to a better life.

And now let me add one word more. All this that I have been saying, and all the blessed strength for ourselves and calming in our sorrows which result therefrom, stand or fall with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is nothing else that makes these things certain. There are, of course, instincts, peradventures, hopes, fears, doubts. But in this region, and in regard to all this cycle of truths, the same thing applies which applies round the whole horizon of Christian Revelation—if you want not speculations but certainties, you have to go to Jesus Christ for them. There were many men who thought that there were islands of the sea beyond the setting sun that dyed the western waves, but Columbus went and came back again, and brought their products—and then the thought became a fact. Unless you believe that Jesus Christ has come back from 'the bourne

from which no traveller returns,' and has come laden with the gifts of 'happy isles of Eden' far beyond the sea, there is no certitude upon which a dying man can lay his head, or by which a bleeding heart can be staunched. But when He draws near, alive from the dead, and says to us, as He did to the disciples on the evening of the day of Resurrection, 'Peace be unto you,' and shows us His hands and His side, then we do not only speculate or think a future life possible or probable, or hesitate to deny it, or hope or fear, as the case may be, but we *know*, and we can say: 'All things are ours ... death' amongst others. The fact that Jesus Christ has died changes the whole aspect of death to His servant, inasmuch as in that great solitude he has a companion, and in the valley of the shadow of death sees footsteps that tell him of One that went before.

Nor need I do more than remind you how the manner of our Lord's death shows that He is Lord not only of the dead but of the Death that makes them dead. For His own tremendous assertion, 'I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again,' was confirmed by His attitude and His words at the last, as is hinted at by the very expressions with which the Evangelists record the fact of His death: 'He yielded up His spirit,' 'He gave up the ghost,' 'He breathed out His life.' It is confirmed to us by such words as those remarkable ones of the Apocalypse, which speak of Him as 'the Living One,' who, by His own will, 'became dead.' He

died because He would, and He would die because He loved you and me. And in dying, He showed Himself to be, not the Victim, but the Conqueror, of the Death to which He submitted. The Jewish king on the fatal field of Gilboa called his sword-bearer, and the servant came, and Saul bade him smite, and when his trembling hand shrank from such an act, the king fell on his own sword. The Lord of life and death summoned His servant Death, and He came obedient, but Jesus died not by Death's stroke, but by His own act. So that Lord of Death, who died because He would, is the Lord who has the keys of death and the grave. In regard to one servant He says, 'I will that he tarry till I come,' and that man lives through a century, and in regard to another He says, 'Follow thou Me,' and that man dies on a cross. The dying Lord is Lord of Death, and the living Lord is for us all the Prince of Life.

Brethren, we have to take His yoke upon us by the act of faith which leads to a love that issues in an obedience which will become more and more complete, as we become more fully Christ's. Then death will be ours, for then we shall count that the highest good for us will be fuller union with, a fuller possession of, and a completer conformity to, Jesus Christ our King, and that whatever brings us these, even though it brings also pain and sorrow and much from which we shrink, is all on our side. It is possible —may it be so with each of us!—that for us Death may be, not an enemy that bans us into

darkness and inactivity, or hales us to a judgment-seat, but the Angel who wakes us, at whose touch the chains fall off, and who leads us through ‘the iron gate that opens of its own accord,’ and brings us into the City.

SERVANTS AND LORDS

> ‘All things are yours; 22. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23. And ye are Christ's.’—1 COR. iii. 21-23.

The Corinthian Christians seem to have carried into the Church some of the worst vices of Greek—and English—political life. They were split up into wrangling factions, each swearing by the name of some person. Paul was the battle-cry of one set; Apollos of another. Paul and Apollos were very good friends, their admirers bitter foes—according to a very common experience. The springs lie close together up in the hills, the rivers may be parted by half a continent.

These feuds were all the more detestable to the Apostle because his name was dragged into them; and so he sets himself, in the first part of this letter, with all his might, to shame and to argue the Corinthian Christians out of their wrangling. This great text is one of the considerations which he adduces with that purpose. In effect he says, ‘To pin your faith to any one teacher is a wilful narrowing of the sources of your blessing and your wisdom. You

say you are Paul's men. Has Apollos got nothing that he could teach you? and may you not get any good out of brave brother Cephas? Take them all; they were all meant for your good. Let no man glory in individuals.'

That is all that his argument required him to say. But in his impetuous way he goes on into regions far beyond. His thought, like some swiftly revolving wheel, catches fire of its own rapid motion; and he blazes up into this triumphant enumeration of all the things that serve the soul which serves Jesus Christ. 'You are lords of men, of the world of time, of death, of eternity; but you are not lords of yourselves. You belong to Jesus, and in the measure in which you belong to Him do all things belong to you.'

I. I think, then, that I shall best bring out the fulness of these words by simply following them as they lie before us, and asking you to consider, first, how Christ's servants are men's lords.

'All things are yours, Paul, Apollos, Cephas.' These three teachers were all lights kindled at the central Light, and therefore shining. They were fragments of His wisdom, of Him that spoke; varying, but yet harmonious, and mutually complementary aspects of the one infinite Truth had been committed to them. Each was but a part of the mighty whole, a little segment of the circle

'They are but broken lights of Thee,

And Thou, O Lord! art more than they.'

And in the measure, therefore, in which men adhere to Christ, and have taken Him for theirs; in that measure are they delivered from all undue dependence on, still more from all slavish submission to, any single individual teacher or aspect of truth. To have Christ for ours, and to be His, which are only the opposite sides of the same thing, mean, in brief, to take Jesus Christ for the source of all knowledge of moral and religious truth. His Word is the Christian's creed, His Person and the truths that lie in Him, are the fountains of all our knowledge of God and man. To be Christ's is to take Him as the master who has absolute authority over conduct and practice. His commandment is the Christian's duty; His pattern the Christian's all-sufficient example; His smile the Christian's reward. To be Christ's is to take Him for the home of our hearts, in whose gracious and sweet love we find all sufficiency and a rest for our seeking affections. And so, if ye are His, Paul, Apollos, Cephas, all men are yours; in the sense that you are delivered from all undue dependence upon them; and in the sense that they subserve your highest good.

So the true democracy of Christianity, which abjures swearing by the words of any teacher, is simply the result of loyal adherence to the teaching of Jesus Christ. And that proud independence which some of you seek to cultivate, and on the strength of which you

declare that no man is your master upon earth, is an unwholesome and dangerous independence, unless it be conjoined with the bowing down of the whole nature, in loyal submission, to the absolute authority of the only lips that ever spoke truth, truth only, and truth always. If Christ be our Master, if we take our creed from Him, if we accept His words and His revelation of the Father as our faith and our objective religion, then all the slavery to favourite names, all the taking of truth second-hand from the lips that we honour, all the partisanship for one against another which has been the shame and the ruin of the Christian Church, and is working untold mischiefs in it to-day, are ended at once. ‘One is your Master, even Christ.’ ‘Call no man Rabbi! upon earth; but bow before Him, the Incarnate and the Personal Truth.’

And in like manner they who are Christ's are delivered from all temptations to make men's maxims and practices and approbation the law of their conduct. Society presses upon each of us; what we call public opinion, which is generally the clatter of the half-dozen people that happen to stand nearest us, rules us; and it needs to be said very emphatically to all Christian men and women—Take your law of conduct from His lips, and from nobody else's.

‘They say. What say they? Let them say.’ If we take Christ's commandment for our absolute law, and Christ's approbation for our highest aim and

all-sufficient reward, we shall then be able to brush aside other maxims and other people's opinions of us, safely and humbly, and to say, ‘With me it is a very small matter to be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord.’

The envoy of some foreign power cares very little what the inhabitants of the land to which he is ambassador may think of him and his doings; it is his sovereign's good opinion that he seeks to secure. The soldier's reward is his commander's praise, the slave's joy is the master's smile, and for us it ought to be the law of our lives, and in the measure in which we really belong to Christ it will be the law of our lives, that ‘we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be pleasing to Him.’

So, brethren, as teachers, as patterns, as objects of love which is only too apt to be exclusive and to master us, we can only take one another in subordination to our supreme submission to Christ, and if we are His, our duty, as our joy, is to count no man necessary to our wellbeing, but to hang only on the one Man, whom it is safe and blessed to believe utterly, to obey abjectly, and to love with all our strength, because He is more than man, even God manifest in the flesh.

II. And now let us pass to the next idea here, secondly, Christ's servants are the lords of ‘the world.’

That phrase is used here, no doubt, as meaning the external material universe. These creatures around us, they belong to us, if we belong to Jesus Christ. That man owns the world who despises it. There are plenty of rich men in Manchester who say they possess so many thousand pounds. Turn the sentence about and it would be a great deal truer—the thousands of pounds possess them. They are the slaves of their own possessions, and every man who counts any material thing as indispensable to his wellbeing, and regards it as the chiefest good, is the slave-servant of that thing. He owns the world who turns it to the highest use of growing his soul by it. All material things are given, and, I was going to say, were created, for the growth of men, or at all events their highest purpose is that men should, by them, grow. And therefore, as the scaffolding is swept away when the building is finished, so God will sweep away this material universe with all its wonders of beauty and of contrivance, when men have been grown by means of it. The material is less than the soul, and he is master of the world, and owns it, who has got thoughts out of it, truth out of it, impulses out of it, visions of God out of it, who has by it been led nearer to his divine Master. If I look out upon a fair landscape, and the man who draws the rents of it is standing by my side, and I suck more sweetness, and deeper impulses, and larger and loftier thoughts out of it than he does, it belongs to me far more than it does to him. The world is his who from it has learned to

despise it, to know himself and to know God. He owns the world who uses it as the arena, or wrestling ground, on which, by labour, he may gain strength, and in which he may do service. Antagonism helps to develop muscle, and the best use of the outward frame of things is that we shall take it as the field upon which we can serve God.

And now all these three things—the contempt of earth, the use of earth for growing souls, and the use of earth as the field of service—all these things belong most truly to the man who belongs to Christ. The world is His, and if we live near Him and cultivate fellowship with Him, and see His face gleaming through all the Material, and are led up nearer to Him by everything around us, then we own the world and wring the sweetness to the last drop out of it, though we may have but little of that outward relation to its goods which short-sighted men call possessing them. We may solve the paradox of those who, 'having nothing, yet have all,' if we belong to Christ the Lord of all things, and so have co-possession with Him of all His riches.

III. Further, my text tells us, in the third place, that Christian men, who belong to Jesus Christ, are the lords and masters of 'life and death.'

Both of these words are here used, as it seems to me, in their simple, physical sense, natural life and natural death. You may say, 'Well, everybody is lord of life in that sense.' Yes, of

course, in a fashion we all possess it, seeing that we are all alive. But that mysterious gift of personality, that awful gift of conscious existence, only belongs, in the deepest sense, to the men who belong to Jesus Christ. I do not call that man the owner of his own life who is not the lord of his own spirit. I do not see in what, except in the mere animal sense in which a fly, or a spider, or a toad may be called the master of its life, that man owns himself who has not given up himself to Jesus Christ. The only way to get a real hold of yourselves is to yield yourselves to Him who gives you back Himself, and yourself along with Him. The true ownership of life depends upon self-control, and self-control depends upon letting Jesus Christ govern us wholly. So the measure in which it is true of me that 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' is the measure in which the lower life of sense really belongs to us, and ministers to our highest good.

And then turn to the other member of this wonderful antithesis, 'whether life or *death*.' Surely if there is anything over which no man can become lord, except by sinfully taking his fate into his own hands, it is death. And yet even death, in which we seem to be abjectly passive, and by which so many of us are dragged away reluctantly from everything that we care to possess, may become a matter of consent and therefore a moral act. Animals expire; a Christian man may yield his soul to his Saviour, who is the Lord both of the dead and of the

living. If thus we feel our dependence upon Him, and yield up our lives to Him, and can say, 'Living or dying we are the Lord's,' then we may be quite sure that death, too, will be our servant, and that our wills will be concerned even in passing out of life.

Still more, if you and I, dear brethren, belong to Jesus Christ, then death is our fellow-servant who comes to call us out of this ill-lighted workshop into the presence of the King. And at His magic cold touch, cares and toils and sorrows are stiffened into silence, like noisy streams bound in white frost; and we are lifted clean up out of all the hubbub and the toil into eternal calm. Death is ours because it fulfils our deepest desires, and comes as a messenger to paupers to tell them they have a great estate. Death is ours if we be Christ's.

IV. And lastly, Christ's servants are the lords of time and eternity, 'things present or things to come.'

Our Apostle's division, in this catalogue of his, is rhetorical rather than logical; and we need not seek to separate the first of this final pair from others which we have already encountered in our study of the words, but still we may draw a distinction. The whole mass of 'things present,' including not only that material universe which we call the world, but all the events and circumstances of our lives, over these we may exercise supreme control. If we are bowing in

humble submission to Jesus Christ, they will all subserve our highest good. Every weather will be right; night and day equally desirable; the darkness will be good for eyes that have been tired of brightness and that need repose, the light will be good. The howling tempests of winter and its white snows, the sharp winds of spring and its bursting sunshine; the calm steady heat of June and the mellowing days of August, all serve to ripen the grain. And so all ‘things present,’ the light and the dark, the hopes fulfilled and the hopes disappointed, the gains and the losses, the prayers answered and the prayers unanswered, they will all be recognised, if we have the wisdom that comes from submission to Jesus Christ's will, as being ours and ministering to our highest blessing.

We shall be their lords too inasmuch as we shall be able to control them. We need not be ‘anvils but hammers.’ We need not let outward circumstances dominate and tyrannise over us. We need not be like the mosses in the stream, that lie whichever way the current sets, nor like some poor little sailing boat that is at the mercy of the winds and the waves, but may carry an inward impulse like some great ocean-going steamer, the throb of whose power shall drive us straight forward on our course, whatever beats against us. That we may have this inward power and mastery over things present, and not be shaped and moulded and made by them, let us yield ourselves to Christ, and He will help us to rule them.

And then, all ‘things to come,’ the dim, vague future, shall be for each of us like some sunlit ocean stretching shoreless to the horizon; every little ripple flashing with its own bright sunshine, and all bearing us onwards to the great Throne that stands on the sea of glass mingled with fire.

Then, my brother, ask yourselves what your future is if you have not Christ for your Friend.

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'I backward cast mine eye
  On prospects drear;
And forward though I cannot see,
  I guess and fear.'
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So I beseech you, yield yourselves to Jesus Christ, He died to win us. He bears our sins that they may be all forgiven. If we give ourselves to Him who has given Himself to us, then we shall be lords of men, of the world, of life and death, of time and eternity.

In the old days conquerors used to bestow upon their followers lands and broad dominions on condition of their doing suit and service, and bringing homage to them. Christ, the King of the universe, makes His subjects kings, and will give us to share in His dominion, so that to each of us may be fulfilled that boundless and almost unbelievable promise: ‘He that overcometh shall inherit all things.’ ‘All are yours if ye are Christ's.’

THE THREE TRIBUNALS

> 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.'—1 COR. iv. 3, 4.

The Church at Corinth was honeycombed by the characteristic Greek vice of party spirit. The three great teachers, Paul, Peter, Apollos, were pitted against each other, and each was unduly exalted by those who swore by him, and unduly depreciated by the other two factions. But the men whose names were the war-cries of these sections were themselves knit in closest friendship, and felt themselves to be servants in common of one Master, and fellow-workers in one task.

So Paul, in the immediate context, associating Peter and Apollos with himself, bids the Corinthians think of '*us*' as being servants of Christ, and not therefore responsible to men; and as stewards of the mysteries of God, that is, dispensers of truths long hidden but now revealed, and as therefore accountable for correct accounts and faithful dispensation only to the Lord of the household. Being responsible to Him, they heeded very little what others thought about them. Being responsible to Him, they could not accept vindication by their own

consciences as being final. There was a judgment beyond these.

So here we have three tribunals—that of man's estimates, that of our own consciences, that of Jesus Christ. An appeal lies from the first to the second, and from the second to the third. It is base to depend on men's judgments; it is well to attend to the decisions of conscience, but it is not well to take it for granted that, if conscience approve, we are absolved. The court of final appeal is Jesus Christ, and what He thinks about each of us. So let us look briefly at these three tribunals.

I. First, the lowest—men's judgment.

'With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you,' enlightened Christians that you are, or by the outside world. Now, Paul's letters give ample evidence that he was keenly alive to the hostile and malevolent criticisms and slanders of his untiring opponents. Many a flash of sarcasm out of the cloud like a lightning bolt, many a burst of wounded affection like rain from summer skies, tell us this. But I need not quote these. Such a character as his could not but be quick to feel the surrounding atmosphere, whether it was of love or of suspicion. So, he had to harden himself against what naturally had a great effect upon him, the estimate which he felt that people round him were making of him. There was nothing brusque, rough, contemptuous in his brushing aside these

popular judgments. He gave them all due weight, and yet he felt, 'From all that this lowest tribunal may decide, there are two appeals, one to my own conscience, and one to my Master in heaven.'

Now, I suppose I need not say a word about the power which that terrible court which is always sitting, and which passes judgment upon every one of us, though we do not always hear the sentences read, has upon us all. There is a power which it is meant to have. It is not good for a man to stand constantly in the attitude of defying whatever anybody else chooses to say or to think about him. But the danger to which we are all exposed, far more than that other extreme, is of deferring too completely and slavishly to, and being far too subtly influenced in all that we do by, the thought of what A, B, or C, may have to say or to think about it. 'The last infirmity of noble minds,' says Milton about the love of fame. It is an infirmity to love it, and long for it, and live by it. It is a weakening of humanity, even where men are spurred to great efforts by the thought of the reverberation of these in the ear of the world, and of the honour and glory that may come therefrom.

But not only in these higher forms of seeking after reputation, but in lower forms, this trembling before, and seeking to conciliate, the tribunal of what we call 'general opinion,' which means the voices of the half-dozen people that are beside us and know about us, besets us all,

and weakens us all in a thousand ways. How many men would lose all the motive that they have for living reputable lives, if nobody knew anything about it? How many of you, when you go to London, and are strangers, frequent places that you would not be seen in in Manchester? How many of us are hindered, in courses which we know that we ought to pursue, because we are afraid of this or that man or woman, and of what they may look or speak? There is a regard to man's judgment, which is separated by the very thinnest partition from hypocrisy. There is a very shadowy distinction between the man who, consciously or unconsciously, does a thing with an eye to what people may say about it, and the man who pretends to be what he is not for the sake of the reputation that he may thereby win.

Now, the direct tendency of Christian faith and principle is to dwindle into wholesome insignificance the multitudinous voice of men's judgments. For, if I understand at all what Christianity means, it means centrally and essentially this, that I am brought into loving personal relation with Jesus Christ, and draw from Him the power of my life, and from Him the law of my life, and from Him the stimulus of my life, and from Him the reward of my life. If there is a direct communication between me and Him, and if I am deriving from Him the life that He gives, which is ‘free from the law of sin and death,’ I shall have little need or desire to heed the judgment that men, who see only the

surface, may pass upon me, and upon my doings, and I shall refer myself to Him instead of to them. Those who can go straight to Christ, whose lives are steeped in Him, who feel that they draw all from Him, and that their actions and character are moulded by His touch and His Spirit, are responsible to no other tribunal. And the less they think about what men have to say of them the stronger, the nobler, the more Christ-like they will be.

There is no need for any contempt or roughness to blend with such a putting aside of men's judgments. The velvet glove may be worn upon the iron hand. All meekness and lowliness may go with this wholesome independence, and must go with it unless that independence is false and distorted. ‘With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment,’ need not be said in such a tone as to mean ‘I do not care a rush what you think about me’; but it must be said in such a tone as to mean ‘I care supremely for one approbation, and if I have that I can bear anything besides.’

Let me appeal to you to cultivate more distinctly, as a plain Christian duty, this wholesome independence of men's judgment. I suppose there never was a day when it was more needed that men should be themselves, seeing with their own eyes what God may reveal to them and they are capable of receiving, and walking with their own feet on the path that fits them, whatsoever other people may say about it.

For the multiplication of daily literature, the way in which we are all living in glass houses nowadays—everybody knowing everything about everybody else, and delighting in the gossip which takes the place of literature in so many quarters—and the tendency of society to a more democratic form give the many-headed monster and its many tongues far more power than is wholesome, in the shaping of the lives and character and conduct of most men. The evil of democracy is that it levels down all to one plane, and that it tends to turn out millions of people, as like each other as if they had been made in a machine. And so we need, I believe, even more than our fathers did, to lay to heart this lesson, that the direct result of a deep and strong Christian faith is the production of intensely individual character. And if there are plenty of angles in it, perhaps so much the better. We are apt to be rounded by being rubbed against each other, like the stones on the beach, till there is not a sharp corner or a point that can prick anywhere. So society becomes utterly monotonous, and is insipid and profitless because of that. You Christian people, be yourselves, after your own pattern. And whilst you accept all help from surrounding suggestions and hints, make it ‘a very small thing that you be judged of men.’ And you, young men, in warehouses and shops, and you, students, and you, boys and girls, that are budding into life, never mind what other people say. ‘Let thine eyes look right onwards,’ and let

all the clatter on either side of you go on as it will. The voices are very loud, but if we go up high enough on the hill-top, to the secret place of the Most High, we shall look down and see, but not hear, the bustle and the buzz; and in the great silence Christ will whisper to us, 'Well done! good and faithful servant.' That praise is worth getting, and one way to get it is to put aside the hindrance of anxious seeking to conciliate the good opinion of men.

II. Note the higher court of conscience.

Our Apostle is not to be taken here as contradicting what he says in other places. 'I judge not mine own self,'—yet in one of these same letters to the Corinthians he says, 'If we judged ourselves we should not be judged.' So that he does not mean here that he is entirely without any estimate of his own character or actions. That he did in some sense judge himself is evident from the next clause, because he goes on to say, 'I know nothing against myself.' If he acquitted himself, he must previously have been judging himself. But his acquittal of himself is not to be understood as if it covered the whole ground of his life and character, but it is to be confined to the subject in hand—viz. his faithfulness as a steward of the mysteries of God. But though there is nothing in that region of his life which he can charge against himself as unfaithfulness, he goes on to say, 'Yet am I not hereby justified?'

Our absolution by conscience is not infallible. I suppose that conscience is more reliable when it condemns than when it acquits. It is never safe for a man to neglect it when it says, 'You are wrong!' It is just as unsafe for a man to accept it, without further investigation, when it says, 'You are right!' For the only thing that is infallible about what we call conscience is its sentence, 'It is right to do right.' But when it proceeds to say 'This, that, and the other thing is right; and therefore it is right for you to do it,' there may be errors in the judgment, as everybody's own experience tells them. The inward judge needs to be stimulated, to be enlightened, to be corrected often. I suppose that the growth of Christian character is very largely the discovery that things that we thought innocent are not, for us, so innocent as we thought them.

You only need to go back to history, or to go down into your own histories, to see how, as light has increased, dark corners have been revealed that were invisible in the less brilliant illumination. How long it has taken the Christian Church to find out what Christ's Gospel teaches about slavery, about the relations of sex, about drunkenness, about war, about a hundred other things that you and I do not yet know, but which our successors will wonder that we failed to see! Inquisitor and martyr have equally said, 'We are serving God.' Surely, too, nothing is more clearly witnessed by individual experience, than that we may do a wrong thing, and think that it is right. 'They that kill you will think that

they do God service.'

So, Christian people, accept the inward monition when it is stern and prohibitive. Do not be too sure about it when it is placable and permissive. 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.' There may be secret faults, lying all unseen beneath the undergrowth in the forest, which yet do prick and sting. The upper floors of the house where we receive company, and where we, the tenants, generally live, may be luxurious, and sweet, and clean. What about the cellars, where ugly things crawl and swarm, and breed, and sting?

Ah, dear brethren! when my conscience says to me, 'You may do it,' it is always well to go to Jesus Christ, and say to Him 'May I?' 'Search me, O God, and ... see if there be any wicked way in me,' and show it to me, and help me to cast it out. 'I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified.'

III. Lastly, note the supreme court of final appeal.

'He that judgeth me is the Lord.' Now it is obvious that 'the Lord' here is Christ, both because of the preceding context and because of the next verse, which speaks of His coming. And it is equally obvious, though it is often unnoticed, that the judgment of which the Apostle is here speaking is a present and preliminary judgment. 'He that *judgeth* me'—not,

'will judge,' but *now*, at this very moment. That is to say, whilst people round us are passing their superficial estimates upon me, and whilst my conscience is excusing, or else accusing me—and in neither case with absolute infallibility—there is another judgment, running concurrently with them, and going on in silence. That calm eye is fixed upon me, and sifting me, and knowing me. *That* judgment is not fallible, because before Him 'the hidden things' that the darkness shelters, those creeping things in the cellars that I was speaking about, are all manifest; and to Him the 'counsels of the heart,' that is, the motives from which the actions flow, are all transparent and legible. So His judgment, the continual estimate of me which Jesus Christ, in His supreme knowledge of me, has, at every moment of my life—*that* is uttering the final word about me and my character.

His estimate will dwindle the sentences of the other two tribunals into nothingness. What matter what his fellow-servants say about the steward's accounts, and distribution of provisions, and management of the household? He has to render his books, and to give account of his stewardship, only to his lord.

The governor of a Crown Colony may attach some importance to colonial opinion, but he reports home; and it is what the people in Downing Street will say that he thinks about. We have to report home; and it is the King whom we serve, to whom we have to give an account.

The gladiator, down in the arena, did not much mind whether the thumbs of the populace were up or down, though the one was the signal for his life and the other for his death. He looked to the place where, between the purple curtains and the flashing axes of the lictors, the emperor sate. Our Emperor once was down on the sand Himself, and although we are 'compassed about with a cloud of witnesses,' we look to the Christ, the supreme Arbiter, and take acquittal or condemnation, life or death, from Him.

That judgment, persistent all through each of our lives, is preliminary to the future tribunal and sentence. The Apostle employs in this context two distinct words, both of which are translated in our version 'judge.' The one which is used in these three clauses, on which I have been commenting, means a preliminary examination, and the one which is used in the next verse means a final decisive trial and sentence. So, dear brethren, Christ is gathering materials for His final sentence; and you and I are writing the depositions which will be adduced in evidence. Oh! how little all that the world may have said about a man will matter then! Think of a man standing before that great white throne, and saying, 'I held a very high place in the estimation of my neighbours. The newspapers and the reviews blew my trumpet assiduously. My name was carved upon the plinth of a marble statue, that my fellow-citizens set up in honour of my many virtues,'—and the name was illegible centuries before the statue

was burned in the last fire!

Brother! seek for the praise from Him, which is praise indeed. If He says, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' it matters little what censures men may pass on us. If He says, 'I never knew you,' all their praises will not avail. 'Wherefore we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to Him.'

THE FESTAL LIFE

> 'Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven ... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.'—1 COR. v. 8.

There had been hideous immorality in the Corinthian Church. Paul had struck at it with heat and force, sternly commanding the exclusion of the sinner. He did so on the ground of the diabolical power of infection possessed by evil, and illustrated that by the very obvious metaphor of leaven, a morsel of which, as he says, 'will leaven the whole lump,' or, as we say, 'batch.' But the word 'leaven' drew up from the depths of his memory a host of sacred associations connected with the Jewish Passover. He remembered the sedulous hunting in every Jewish house for every scrap of leavened matter; the slaying of the Paschal Lamb, and the following feast. Carried away by these

associations, he forgets the sin in the Corinthian Church for a moment, and turns to set forth, in the words of the text, a very deep and penetrating view of what the Christian life is, how it is sustained, and what it demands. 'Wherefore,' says he, 'let us keep the feast ... with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' That 'wherefore' takes us back to the words before it, And what are these? 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us'; therefore—because of that sacrifice, to us is granted the power, and on us is laid imperatively the obligation, to make life a festival and to purge ourselves. Now, in the notion of a feast, there are two things included—joy and plentiful sustenance. So there are three points here, which I have already indicated—what the Christian life is, a festival; on what it is sustained, the Paschal Sacrifice; what it demands, scrupulous purging out of the old leaven.

I. The Christian life ought to be a continual festival.

The Christian life a feast? It is more usually represented as a fight, a wrestle, a race; and such metaphors correspond, as it would appear, far more closely to the facts of our environment, and to the experiences of our hearts, than does such a metaphor as this. But the metaphor of the festival goes deeper than that of the fight or race, and it does not ignore the strenuous and militant side of the Christian life. No man ever lived a more strenuous life than Paul; no man

had heavier tasks, and did them more cheerily; no man had a sterner fight and fought it more bravely. There is nothing soft, Epicurean, or oblivious of the patent sad facts of humanity in the declaration that after all, beneath all, above all, central to all, the Christian life is a glad festival, when it is the life that it ought to be.

But you say, 'Ah! it is all very well to call it so; but in the first place, continual joy is impossible in the presence of the difficulties, and often sadnesses, that meet us on our life's path; and, in the second place, it is folly to tell us to pump up emotions, or to ignore the occasions for much heaviness and sorrow of heart.' True; but, still, it is possible to cultivate such a temper as makes life habitually joyful. We can choose the aspect under which we by preference and habitually regard our lives. All emotion follows upon a preceding thought, or sensible experience, and we can pick the objects of our thoughts, and determine what aspect of our lives to look at most.

The sky is often piled with stormy, heaped-up masses of blackness, but between them are lakes of calm blue. We can choose whether we look at the clouds or at the blue. *These* are in the lower ranges; *that* fills infinite spaces, upwards and out to the horizon. These are transient, eating themselves away even whilst we look, and black and thunderous as they may be, they are there but for a moment—that is perennial. If we are wise, we shall fix our gaze much rather on the

blue than on the ugly cloud-rack that hides it, and thus shall minister to ourselves occasions for the noble kind of joy which is not noisy and boisterous, 'like the crackling of thorns under a pot,' and does not foam itself away by its very ebullience, but is calm like the grounds of it; still, like the heaven to which it looks; eternal, like the God on whom it is fastened. If we would only steadfastly remember that the one source of worthy and enduring joy is God Himself, and listen to the command, 'Rejoice in the Lord,' we should find it possible to 'rejoice always.' For that thought of Him, His sufficiency, His nearness, His encompassing presence, His prospering eye, His aiding hand, His gentle consolation, His enabling help will take the sting out of even the bitterest of our sorrows, and will brace us to sustain the heaviest, otherwise crushing burdens, and greatly to 'rejoice, though now for a season we are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' The Gulf Stream rushes into the northern hemisphere, melts the icebergs and warms the Polar seas, and so the joy of the Lord, if we set it before us as we can and should do, will minister to us a gladness which will make our lives a perpetual feast.

But there is another thing that we can do; that is, we can clearly recognise the occasions for sorrow in our experience, and yet interpret them by the truths of the Christian faith. That is to say, we can think of them, not so much as they tend to make us sad or glad, but as they tend to make us more assured of our possession of, more

ardent in our love towards, and more submissive in our attitude to, the all-ordering Love which is God. Brethren, if we thought of life, and all its incidents, even when these are darkest and most threatening, as being what it and they indeed are, His training of us into capacity for fuller blessedness, because fuller possession of Himself, we should be less startled at the commandment, 'Rejoice in the Lord always,' and should feel that it was possible, though the figtree did not blossom, and there was no fruit in the vine, though the flocks were cut off from the pastures, and the herds from the stall, yet to rejoice in the God of our salvation. Rightly understood and pondered on, all the darkest passages of life are but like the cloud whose blackness determines the brightness of the rainbow on its front. Rightly understood and reflected on, these will teach us that the paradoxical commandment, 'Count it all joy that ye fall into divers temptations,' is, after all, the voice of true wisdom speaking at the dictation of a clear-eyed faith.

This text, since it is a commandment, implies that obedience to it, and therefore the realisation of this continual festal aspect of life, is very largely in our own power. Dispositions differ, some of us are constitutionally inclined to look at the blacker, and some at the brighter, side of our experiences. But our Christianity is worth little unless it can modify, and to some extent change, our natural tendencies. The joy of the Lord being our strength, the cultivation of

joy in the Lord is largely our duty. Christian people do not sufficiently recognise that it is as incumbent on them to seek after this continual fountain of calm and heavenly joy flowing through their lives, as it is to cultivate some of the more recognised virtues and graces of Christian conduct and character.

Secondly, we have here—

II. The Christian life is a continual feeding on a sacrifice.

‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Wherefore let us keep the feast.’ It is very remarkable that this is the only place in Paul's writings where he articulately pronounces that the Paschal Lamb is a type of Jesus Christ. There is only one other instance in the New Testament where that is stated with equal clearness and emphasis, and that is in John's account of the Crucifixion, where he recognises the fact that Christ died with limbs unbroken, as being a fulfilment, in the New Testament sense of that word, of what was enjoined in regard to the antitype, ‘a bone of him shall not be broken.’

But whilst the definite statement which precedes my text that Christ is ‘our Passover,’ and ‘sacrificed for us’ as such, is unique in Paul's writings, the thought to which it gives clear and crystallised expression runs through the whole of the New Testament. It underlies the Lord's Supper. Did you ever think of how great was the self-assertion of Jesus Christ when He laid His

hand on that sacredest of Jewish rites, which had been established, as the words of the institution of it say, to be ‘a perpetual memorial through all generations,’ brushed it on one side, and in effect, said: ‘You do not need to remember the Passover any more. I am the true Paschal Lamb, whose blood sprinkled on the doorposts averts the sword of the destroying Angel, whose flesh, partaken of, gives immortal life. Remember Me, and this do in remembrance of Me.’ The Lord's Supper witnesses that Jesus thought Himself to be what Paul tells the Corinthians that He is, even our Passover, sacrificed for us. But the point to be observed is this, that just as in that ancient ritual, the lamb slain became the food of the Israelites, so with us the Christ who has died is to be the sustenance of our souls, and of our Christian life. ‘Therefore let us keep the feast.’

Feed upon Him; that is the essential central requirement for all Christian life, and what does feeding on Him mean? ‘How can this man give us his flesh to eat?’ said the Jews, and the answer is plain now, though so obscure then. The flesh which He gave for the life of the world in His death, must by us be taken for the very nourishment of our souls, by the simple act of faith in Him. That is the feeding which brings not only sustenance but life. Christ's death for us is the basis, but it is only the basis, of Christ's living in us, and His death for me is of no use at all to me unless He that died for me lives in me. We feed on Him by faith, which not only trusts

to the Sacrifice as atoning for sin, but feeds on it as communicating and sustaining eternal life —'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, wherefore let us keep the Feast.'

Again, we keep the feast when our minds feed upon Christ by contemplation of what He is, what He has done, what He is doing, what He will do; when we take Him as 'the Master-light of all our seeing,' and in Him, His words and works, His Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, Session as Sovereign at the right hand of God, find the perfect revelation of what God is, the perfect discovery of what man is, the perfect disclosure of what sin is, the perfect prophecy of what man may become, the Light of light, the answer to every question that our spirits can put about the loftiest verities of God and man, the universe and the future. We feed on Christ when, with lowly submission, we habitually subject thoughts, purposes, desires, to His authority, and when we let His will flow into, and make plastic and supple, our wills. We nourish our wills by submitting them to Jesus, and we feed on Him when we not only say 'Lord! Lord!' but when we do the things that He says. We feed on Christ, when we let His great, sacred, all-wise, all-giving, all satisfying love flow into our restless hearts and make them still, enter into our vagrant affections and fix them on Himself. Thus when mind and conscience and will and heart all turn to Jesus, and in Him find their sustenance, we shall be filled with the feast of fat things which He has prepared for all

people. With that bread we shall be satisfied, and with it only, for the husks of the swine are no food for the Father's son, and we ‘spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not,’ if we look anywhere else than to the Paschal Lamb slain for us for the food of our souls.

III. The Christian life is a continual purging out of the old leaven.

I need not remind you how vivid and profoundly significant that emblem of leaven, as applied to all manner of evil, is. But let me remind you how, just as in the Jewish Ritual, the cleansing from all that was leavened was the essential pre-requisite to the participation in the feast, feeding on Jesus Christ, as I have tried to describe it, is absolutely impossible unless our leaven is cleansed away. Children spoil their appetites for wholesome food by eating sweetmeats. Men destroy their capacity for feeding on Christ by hungry desires, and gluttonous satisfying of those desires with the delusive sweets of this passing world. But, my brother, your experience, if you are a Christian man at all, will tell you that in the direct measure in which you have been drawn away into paltering with evil, your appetite for Christ and your capacity for gazing upon Him, contemplating Him, feeding on Him, has died out. There comes a kind of constriction in a man's throat when he is hungering after lesser good, especially when there is a tinge of evil in

the supposed good that he is hungering after, which incapacitates Him from eating the bread of God, which is Jesus Christ.

But let us remember that absolute cleansing from all sin is not essential, in order to have real participation in Jesus Christ. The Jew had to take every scrap of leaven out of his house before he began the Passover. If that were the condition for us, alas! for us all; but the effort after purity, though it has not entirely attained its aim, is enough. Sin abhorred does not prevent a man from participating in the Bread that came down from heaven.

Then observe, too, that for this power to cleanse ourselves, we must have had some participation in Christ, by which there is given to us that new life that conquers evil. In the words immediately preceding my text, the Apostle bases his injunction to purge out the old leaven on the fact that 'ye are unleavened.' Ideally, in so far as the power possessed by them was concerned, these Corinthians were unleavened, even whilst they were bid to purge out the leaven. That is to say, be what you are; realise your ideal, utilise the power you possess, and since by your faith there has been given to you a new life that can conquer all corruption and sin, see that you use the life that is given. Purge out the old leaven because ye are unleavened.

One last word—this stringent exhortation,

which makes Christian effort after absolute purity a Christian duty, and the condition of participation in the Paschal Lamb, is based upon that thought to which I have already referred, of the diabolical power of infection which Evil possesses. Either you must cast it out, or it will choke the better thing in you. It spreads and grows, and propagates itself, and works underground through and through the whole mass. A water-weed got into some of our canals years ago, and it has all but choked some of them. The slime on a pond spreads its green mantle over the whole surface with rapidity. If we do not eject Evil it will eject the good from us. Use the implanted power to cast out this creeping, advancing evil. Sometimes a wine-grower has gone into his cellars, and found in a cask no wine, but a monstrous fungus into which all the wine had, in the darkness, passed unnoticed. I fear some Christian people, though they do not know it, have something like that going on in them.

It is possible for us all to keep this perpetual festival. To live in, on, for, Jesus Christ will give us victory over enemies, burdens, sorrows, sins. We may, if we will, dwell in a calm zone where no tempests rage, hear a perpetual strain of sweet music persisting through thunder peals of sorrow and suffering, and find a table spread for us in the presence of our enemies, at which we shall renew our strength for conflict, and whence we shall rise to fight the good fight a little longer, till we sit with Him at His table in

His Kingdom, and 'eat, and live for ever.'

FORMS *VERSUS* CHARACTER

> 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.'—1 COR. vii. 19.
> 'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.'—GAL. v. 6.
> 'For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.'—GAL. vi. 16 (R. V.).

The great controversy which embittered so much of Paul's life, and marred so much of his activity, turned upon the question whether a heathen man could come into the Church simply by the door of faith, or whether he must also go through the gate of circumcision. We all know how Paul answered the question. Time, which settles all controversies, has settled that one so thoroughly that it is impossible to revive any kind of interest in it; and it may seem to be a pure waste of time to talk about it. But the principles that fought then are eternal, though the forms in which they manifest themselves vary with every varying age.

The Ritualist—using that word in its broadest sense—on the one hand, and the Puritan on the

other, represent permanent tendencies of human nature; and we find to-day the old foes with new faces. These three passages, which I have read, are Paul's deliverance on the question of the comparative value of external rites and spiritual character. They are remarkable both for the identity in the former part of each and for the variety in the latter. In all the three cases he affirms, almost in the same language, that ‘circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,’ that the Ritualist's rite and the Puritan's protest are equally insignificant in comparison with higher things. And then he varies the statement of what the higher things are, in a very remarkable and instructive fashion. The ‘keeping of the commandments of God,’ says one of the texts, is the all-important matter. Then, as it were, he pierces deeper, and in another of the texts (I take the liberty of varying their order) pronounces that ‘a new creature’ is the all-important thing. And then he pierces still deeper to the bottom of all, in the third text, and says the all-important thing is ‘faith which worketh by love.’

I think I shall best bring out the force of these words by dealing first with that emphatic threefold proclamation of the nullity of all externalism; and then with the singular variations in the triple statement of what is essential, viz. spiritual conduct and character.

I. First, the emphatic proclamation of the nullity of outward rites.

'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing,' say two texts. 'Circumcision availeth nothing, and uncircumcision availeth nothing,' says the other. It neither is anything nor does anything. Did Paul say that because circumcision was a Jewish rite? No. As I believe, he said it because it was *a rite*; and because he had learned that the one thing needful was spiritual character, and that no external ceremonial of any sort could produce that. I think we are perfectly warranted in taking this principle of my text, and in extending it beyond the limits of the Jewish rite about which Paul was speaking. For if you remember, he speaks about baptism, in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, in a precisely similar tone and for precisely the same reason, when he says, in effect, 'I baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas, and I think these are all. I am not quite sure. I do not keep any kind of record of such things; God did not send me to baptize, He sent me to preach the Gospel.'

The thing that produced the spiritual result was not the rite, but the truth, and therefore he felt that his function was to preach the truth and leave the rite to be administered by others. Therefore we can extend the principle here to all externalisms of worship, in all forms, in all churches, and say that in comparison with the essentials of an inward Christianity they are nothing and they do nothing.

They have their value. As long as we are here

on earth, living in the flesh, we must have outward forms and symbolical rites. It is in Heaven that the seer 'saw no temple.' Our sense-bound nature requires, and thankfully avails itself of, the help of external rites and ceremonials to lift us up towards the Object of our devotion. A man prays all the better if he bow his head, shut his eyes, and bend his knees. Forms do help us to the realisation of the realities, and the truths which they express and embody. Music may waft our souls to the heavens, and pictures may stir deep thoughts. That is the simple principle on which the value of all external aids to devotion depends. They may be helps towards the appreciation of divine truth, and to the suffusing of the heart with devout emotions which may lead to building up a holy character.

There is a worth, therefore—an auxiliary and subordinate worth—in these things, and in that respect they are *not* nothing, nor do they 'avail nothing.' But then all external rites tend to usurp more than belongs to them, and in our weakness we are apt to cleave to them, and instead of using them as means to lift us higher, to stay in them, and as a great many of us do, to mistake the mere gratification of taste and the excitement of the sensibilities for worship. A bit of stained glass may be glowing with angel-forms and pictured saints, but it always keeps some of the light out, and it always hinders us from seeing through it. And all external worship and form have so strong a tendency to usurp

more than belongs to them, and to drag us down to their own level, even whilst we think that we are praying, that I believe the wisest man will try to pare down the externals of his worship to the lowest possible point. If there be as much body as will keep a soul in, as much form as will embody the spirit, that is all that we want. What is more is dangerous.

All form in worship is like fire, it is a good servant but it is a bad master, and it needs to be kept very rigidly in subordination, or else the spirituality of Christian worship vanishes before men know; and they are left with their dead forms which are only evils—crutches that make people limp by the very act of using them.

Now, my dear friends, when that has happened, when men begin to say, as the people in Paul's time were saying about circumcision, and as people are saying in this day about Christian rites, that they are necessary, then it is needful to take up Paul's ground and to say, ‘No! they are nothing!’ They are useful in a certain place, but if you make them obligatory, if you make them essential, if you say that grace is miraculously conveyed through them, then it is needful that we should raise a strong note of protestation, and declare their absolute nullity for the highest purpose, that of making that spiritual character which alone is essential.

And I believe that this strange recrudescence —to use a modern word—of ceremonialism and

aesthetic worship which we see all round about us, not only in the ranks of the Episcopal Church, but amongst Nonconformists, who are sighing for a less bare service, and here and there are turning their chapels into concert-rooms, and instead of preaching the Gospel are having 'Services of Song' and the like—that all this makes it as needful to-day as ever it was to say to men: 'Forms are not worship. Rites may crush the spirit. Men may yield to the sensuous impressions which they produce, and be lapped in an atmosphere of aesthetic emotion, without any real devotion.'

Such externals are only worth anything if they make us grasp more firmly with our understandings and feel more profoundly with our hearts, the great truths of the Gospel. If they do that, they help; if they are not doing that, they hinder, and are to be fought against. And so we have again to proclaim to-day, as Paul did, 'Circumcision is nothing,' 'but the keeping of the commandments of God.'

Then notice with what remarkable fairness and boldness and breadth the Apostle here adds that other clause: 'and uncircumcision is nothing.' It is a very hard thing for a man whose life has been spent in fighting against an error, not to exaggerate the value of his protest. It is a very hard thing for a man who has been delivered from the dependence upon forms, not to fancy that his formlessness is what the other people think that their forms are. The Puritan

who does not believe that a man can be a good man because he is a Ritualist or a Roman Catholic, is committing the very same error as the Ritualist or the Roman Catholic who does not believe that the Puritan can be a Christian unless he has been 'christened.' The two people are exactly the same, only the one has hold of the stick at one end, and the other at the other. There may be as much idolatry in superstitious reliance upon the bare worship as in the advocacy of the ornate; and many a Nonconformist who fancies that he has 'never bowed the knee to Baal' is as true an idol-worshipper in his superstitious abhorrence of the ritualism that he sees in other communities, as are the men who trust in it the most.

It is a large attainment in Christian character to be able to say with Paul, 'Circumcision is nothing, and my own favourite point of uncircumcision is nothing either. Neither the one side nor the other touches the essentials.'

II. Now let us look at the threefold variety of the designation of these essentials here.

In our first text from the Epistle to the Corinthians we read, 'Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.' If we finished the sentence it would be, 'but the keeping of the commandments of God is everything.'

And by that 'keeping the commandments,' of course, the Apostle does not mean merely

external obedience. He means something far deeper than that, which I put into this plain word, that the one essential of a Christian life is the conformity of the will with God's—not the external obedience merely, but the entire surrender and the submission of my will to the will of my Father in Heaven. That is the all-important thing; that is what God wants; that is the end of all rites and ceremonies; that is the end of all revelation and of all utterances of the divine heart. The Bible, Christ's mission, His passion and death, the gift of His Divine Spirit, and every part of the divine dealings in providence, all converge upon this one aim and goal. For this purpose the Father worketh hitherto, and Christ works, that man's will may yield and bow itself wholly and happily and lovingly to the great infinite will of the Father in heaven.

Brethren! that is the perfection of a man's nature, when his will fits on to God's like one of Euclid's triangles superimposed upon another, and line for line coincides. When his will allows a free passage to the will of God, without resistance or deflection, as light travels through transparent glass; when his will responds to the touch of God's finger upon the keys, like the telegraphic needle to the operator's hand, then man has attained all that God and religion can do for him, all that his nature is capable of; and far beneath his feet may be the ladders of ceremonies and forms and outward acts, by which he climbed to that serene and blessed

height, ‘Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of God's commandments is everything.’

That submission of will is the sum and the test of your Christianity. Your Christianity does not consist only in a mere something which you call faith in Jesus Christ. It does not consist in emotions, however deep and blessed and genuine they may be. It does not consist in the acceptance of a creed. All these are means to an end. They are meant to drive the wheel of life, to build up character, to make your deepest wish to be, ‘Father! not my will, but Thine, be done.’ In the measure in which that is your heart's desire, and not one hair's-breadth further, have you a right to call yourself a Christian.

But, then, I can fancy a man saying: ‘It is all very well to talk about bowing the will in this fashion; how can I do that?’ Well, let us take our second text—the third in the order of their occurrence—‘For neither circumcision is anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.’ That is to say, if we are ever to keep the will of God we must be made over again. Ay! we must! Our own consciences tell us that; the history of all the efforts that ever we have made —and I suppose all of us have made some now and then, more or less earnest and more or less persistent—tells us that there needs to be a stronger hand than ours to come into the fight if it is ever to be won by us. There is nothing more heartless and more impotent than to preach,

‘Bow your wills to God, and then you will be happy; bow your wills to God, and then you will be good.’ If that is all the preacher has to say, his powerless words will but provoke the answer, ‘We cannot. Tell the leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin, as soon as tell a man to reduce this revolted kingdom within him to obedience, and to bow his will to the will of God. We cannot do it.’ But, brethren, in that word, ‘a new creature,’ lies a promise from God; for a creature implies a creator. ‘It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.’ The very heart of what Christ has to offer us is the gift of His own life to dwell in our hearts, and by its mighty energy to make us free from the law of sin and death which binds our wills. We may have our spirits moulded into His likeness, and new tastes, and new desires, and new capacities infused into us, so as that we shall not be left with our own poor powers to try and force ourselves into obedience to God's will, but that submission and holiness and love that keeps the commandments of God, will spring up in our renewed spirits as their natural product and growth. Oh! you men and women who have been honestly trying, half your lifetime, to make yourselves what you know God wants you to be, and who are obliged to confess that you have failed, hearken to the message: ‘If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away.’ The one thing needful is keeping the commandments of God, and the only way by which we can keep the commandments of God is

that we should be formed again into the likeness of Him of whom alone it is true that 'He did always the things that pleased' God.

And so we come to the last of these great texts: 'In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.' That is to say, if we are to be made over again, we must have faith in Christ Jesus. We have got to the root now, so far as we are concerned. We must keep the commandments of God; if we are to keep the commandments we must be made over again, and if our hearts ask how can we receive that new creating power into our lives, the answer is, by 'faith which worketh by love.'

Paul did not believe that external rites could make men partakers of a new nature, but he believed that if a man would trust in Jesus Christ, the life of that Christ would flow into his opened heart, and a new spirit and nature would be born in him. And, therefore, his triple requirements come all down to this one, so far as we are concerned, as the beginning and the condition of the other two. 'Neither circumcision does anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love,' does everything. He that trusts Christ opens his heart to Christ, who comes with His new-creating Spirit, and makes us willing in the day of His power to keep His commandments.

But faith leads us to obedience in yet another

fashion, than this opening of the door of the heart for the entrance of the new-creating Spirit. It leads to it in the manner which is expressed by the words of our text, ‘worketh by love.’ Faith shows itself living, because it leads us to love, and through love it produces its effects upon conduct.

Two things are implied in this designation of faith. If you trust Christ you will love Him. That is plain enough. And you will not love Him unless you trust Him. Though it lies wide of my present purpose, let us take this lesson in passing. You cannot work yourself up into a spasm or paroxysm of religious emotion and love by resolution or by effort. All that you can do is to go and look at the Master and get near Him, and that will warm you up. You can love if you trust. Your trust will make you love; unless you trust you will never love Him.

The second thing implied is, that if you love you will obey. That is plain enough. The keeping of the commandments will be easy where there is love in the heart. The will will bow where there is love in the heart. Love is the only fire that is hot enough to melt the iron obstinacy of a creature's will. The will cannot be driven. Strike it with violence and it stiffens; touch it gently and it yields. If you try to put an iron collar upon the will, like the demoniac in the Gospels, the touch of the apparent restraint drives it into fury, and it breaks the bands asunder. Fasten it with the silken leash of love, and a ‘little child’

can lead it. So faith works by love, because whom we trust we shall love, and whom we love we shall obey.

Therefore we have got to the root now, and nothing is needful but an operative faith, out of which will come all the blessed possession of a transforming Spirit, and all sublimities and noblenesses of an obedient and submissive will.

My brother! Paul and James shake hands here. There is a ‘faith’ so called, which does not work. It is dead! Let me beseech you, none of you to rely upon what you choose to call your faith in Jesus Christ, but examine it. Does it do anything? Does it help you to be like Him? Does it open your hearts for His Spirit to come in? Does it fill them with love to that Master, a love which proves itself by obedience? Plain questions, questions that any man can answer; questions that go to the root of the whole matter. If your faith does that, it is genuine; if it does not, it is not.

And do not trust either to forms, or to your freedom from forms. They will not save your souls, they will not make you more Christ-like. They will not help you to pardon, purity, holiness, blessedness. In these respects neither if we have them are we the better, nor if we have them not are we the worse. If you are trusting to Christ, and by that faith are having your hearts moulded and made over again into all holy obedience, then you have all that you need.

Unless you have, though you partook of all Christian rites, though you believed all Christian truth, though you fought against superstitious reliance on forms, you have not the one thing needful, for 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.'

SLAVES AND FREE

> 'He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.'—1 COR. vii. 22.

This remarkable saying occurs in a remarkable connection, and is used for a remarkable purpose. The Apostle has been laying down the principle, that the effect of true Christianity is greatly to diminish the importance of outward circumstance. And on that principle he bases an advice, dead in the teeth of all the maxims recognised by worldly prudence. He says, in effect, 'Mind very little about getting on and getting up. Do God's will wherever you are, and let the rest take care of itself.' Now, the world says, 'Struggle, wriggle, fight, do anything to better yourself.' Paul says, 'You will better yourself by getting nearer God, and if you secure that—art thou a slave? care not for it; if thou mayest be free, use it rather; art thou bound to a

wife? seek not to be loosed; art thou loosed? seek not to be bound; art thou circumcised? seek not to be uncircumcised; art thou a Gentile? seek not to become in outward form a Jew.' Never mind about externals: the main thing is our relation to Jesus Christ, because in that there is what will be compensation for all the disadvantages of any disadvantageous circumstances, and in that there is what will take the gilt off the gingerbread of any superficial and fleeting good, and will bring a deep-seated and permanent blessing.

Now, I am not going to deal in this sermon with that general principle, nor even to be drawn aside to speak of the tone in which the Apostle here treats the great abomination of slavery, and the singular advice that he gives to its victims; though the consideration of the tone of Christianity to that master-evil of the old world might yield a great many thoughts very relevant to pressing questions of to-day. But my one object is to fix upon the combination which he here brings out in regard to the essence of the Christian life; how that in itself it contains both members of the antithesis, servitude and freedom; so that the Christian man who is free externally is Christ's slave, and the Christian man who is outwardly in bondage is emancipated by his union with Jesus Christ.

There are two thoughts here, the application in diverse directions of the same central idea—viz. the slavery of Christ's free men, and the

freedom of Christ's slaves. And I deal briefly with these two now.

I. First, then, note how, according to the one-half of the antithesis, Christ's freed men are slaves.

Now, the way in which the New Testament deals with that awful wickedness of a man held in bondage by a man is extremely remarkable. It might seem as if such a hideous piece of immorality were altogether incapable of yielding any lessons of good. But the Apostles have no hesitation whatever in taking slavery as a clear picture of the relation in which all Christian people stand to Jesus Christ their Lord. He is the owner and we are the slaves. For you must remember that the word most inadequately rendered here, ‘servant’ does not mean a hired man who has, of his own volition, given himself for a time to do specific work and get wages for it; but it means ‘a bond-slave,’ a chattel owned by another. All the ugly associations which gather round the word are transported bodily into the Christian region, and there, instead of being hideous, take on a shape of beauty, and become expressions of the deepest and most blessed truths, in reference to Christian men's dependence upon, and submission to, and place in the household and the heart of, Jesus Christ, their Owner.

And what is the centre idea that lies in this metaphor, if you like to call it so? It is this:

absolute authority, which has for its correlative —for the thing in us that answers to it— unconditional submission. Jesus Christ has the perfect right to command each of us, and we are bound to bow ourselves, unreluctant, unmurmuring, unhesitating, with complete submission at His feet. His authority, and our submission, go far, far deeper than the most despotic sway of the most tyrannous master, or than the most abject submission of the most downtrodden slave. For no man can coerce another man's will, and no man can require more, or can ever get more, than that outward obedience which may be rendered with the most sullen and fixed rebellion of a hating heart and an obstinate will. But Jesus Christ demands that if we call ourselves Christians we shall bring, not our members only as instruments to Him, in outward surrender and service, but that we shall yield ourselves, with our capacities of willing and desiring, utterly, absolutely, constantly to Him.

The founder of the Jesuits laid it down as a rule for his Order that each member of it was to be at the master's disposal like a corpse, or a staff in the hand of a blind man. That was horrible. But the absolute putting of myself at the disposal of another's will, which is expressed so tyrannously in Loyola's demand, is the simple duty of every Christian, and as long as we have recalcitrating wills, which recoil at anything which Christ commands or appoints, and perk up their own inclinations in the face of His

solemn commandment, or that shrink from doing and suffering whatsoever He imposes and enjoins, we have still to learn what it means to be Christ's disciples.

Dear brethren, absolute submission is not all that makes a disciple, but, depend upon it, there is no discipleship worth calling by the name without it. So I come to each of you with His message to you:—Down on your faces before Him! Bow your obstinate will, surrender yourselves and accept Him as absolute, dominant Lord over your whole being! Are you Christians after that pattern? Being freemen, are you Christ's slaves?

It does not matter what sort of work the owner sets his household of slaves to do. One man is picked out to be his pipe-bearer, or his shoe-cleaner; and, if the master is a sovereign, another one is sent off, perhaps, to be governor of a province, or one of his council. They are all slaves; and the service that each does is equally important.

'All service ranks the same with God:
There is no last nor first.'

What does it matter what you and I are set to do? Nothing. And, so, why need we struggle and wear our hearts out to get into conspicuous places, or to do work that shall bring some revenue of praise said glory to ourselves? ‘Play well thy part; there all the honour lies,’ the world can say. Serve Christ in anything, and all

His servants are alike in His sight.

The slave-owner had absolute power of life and death over his dependants. He could split up families; he could sell away dear ones; he could part husband and wife, parent and child. The slave was his, and he could do what he liked with his own, according to the cruel logic of ancient law. And Jesus Christ, the Lord of the household, the Lord of providence, can say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes into the mists and the shadows of death. And He can say to those who are most closely united, ‘Loose your hands! I have need of one of you yonder. I have need of the other one here.’ And if we are wise, if we are His servants in any real deep sense, we shall not kick against the appointments of His supreme, autocratic, and yet most loving Providence, but be content to leave the arbitrament of life and death, of love united or of love parted, in His hands, and say, ‘Whether we live we are the Lord's, or whether we die we are the Lord's; living or dying we are His.’

The slave-owner owned all that the slave owned. He gave him a little cottage, with some humble sticks of furniture in it; and a bit of ground on which to grow his vegetables for his family. But he to whom the owner of the vegetables and the stools belonged owned them too. And if we are Christ's servants, our banker's book is Christ's, and our purse is Christ's, and our investments are Christ's; and our mills, and our warehouses, and our shops and our

businesses are His. We are not His slaves, if we arrogate to ourselves the right of doing what we like with His possessions.

And, then, still further, there comes into our Apostle's picture here yet another point of resemblance between slaves and the disciples of Jesus. For the hideous abominations of the slave-market are transferred to the Christian relation, and defecated and cleansed of all their abominations and cruelty thereby. For what immediately follows my text is, 'Ye are bought with a price.' Jesus Christ has won us for Himself. There is only one price that can buy a heart, and that is a heart. There is only one way of getting a man to be mine, and that is by giving myself to be his. So we come to the very vital, palpitating centre of all Christianity when we say, 'He gave Himself for us, that He might acquire to Himself a people for His possession.' Thus His purchase of His slave, when we remember that it is the buying of a man in his inmost personality, changes all that might seem harsh in the requirement of absolute submission into the most gracious and blessed privilege. For when I am won by another, because that other has given him or her whole self to me, then the language of love is submission, and the conformity of the two wills is the delight of each loving will. Whoever has truly been wooed into relationship with Jesus, by reflection upon the love with which Jesus grapples him to His heart, finds that there is nothing so blessed as to yield one's self utterly and for ever to His service.

The one bright point in the hideous institution of slavery was, that it bound the master to provide for the slave, and though that was degrading to the inferior, it made his life a careless, child-like, merry life, even amidst the many cruelties and abominations of the system. But what was a good, dashed with a great deal of evil, in that relation of man to man, comes to be a pure blessing and good in our relation to Him. If I am Christ's slave, it is His business to take care of His own property, and I do not need to trouble myself much about it. If I am His slave, He will be quite sure to find me in food and necessaries enough to get His tale of work out of me; and I may cast all my care upon Him, for He careth for me. So, brethren, absolute submission and the devolution of all anxiety on the Master are what is laid upon us, if we are Christ's slaves.

II. Then there is the other side, about which I must say, secondly, a word or two; and that is, the freedom of Christ's slaves.

As the text puts it, ‘He that is called, being a servant, is the Lord's freedman.’ A freedman was one who was emancipated, and who therefore stood in a relation of gratitude to his emancipator and patron. So in the very word ‘freedman’ there is contained the idea of submission to Him who has struck off the fetters.

But, apart from that, let me just remind you, in a sentence or two, that whilst there are many

other ways by which men have sought, and have partially attained, deliverance from the many fetters and bondages that attach to our earthly life, the one perfect way by which a man can be truly, in the deepest sense of the word and in his inmost being, a free man is by faith in Jesus Christ.

I do not for a moment forget how wisdom and truth, and noble aims and high purposes, and culture of various kinds have, in lower degrees and partially, emancipated men from self and flesh and sin and the world, and all the other fetters that bind us. But sure I am that the process is never so completely and so assuredly effected as by the simple way of absolute submission to Jesus Christ, taking Him for the supreme and unconditional Arbiter and Sovereign of a life.

If we do that, brethren, if we really yield ourselves to Him, in heart and will, in life and conduct, submitting our understanding to His infallible Word, and our wills to His authority, regulating our conduct by His perfect pattern, and in all things seeking to serve Him and to realise His presence, then be sure of this, that we shall be set free from the one real bondage, and that is the bondage of our own wicked selves. There is no such tyranny as mob tyranny; and there is no such slavery as to be ruled by the mob of our own passions and lusts and inclinations and other meannesses that yelp and clamour within us, and seek to get hold of us

and to sway. There is only one way by which the brute domination of the lower part of our nature can be surely and thoroughly put down, and that is by turning to Jesus Christ and saying to Him, 'Lord! do Thou rule this anarchic kingdom within me, for I cannot govern it myself. Do Thou guide and direct and subdue.' You can only govern yourself and be free from the compulsion of your own evil nature when you surrender the control to the Master, and say ever, 'Speak, Lord! for Thy slave hears. Here am I, send me.'

And that is the only way by which a man can be delivered from the bondage of dependence upon outward things. I said at the beginning of these remarks that my text occurred in the course of a discussion in which the Apostle was illustrating the tendency of true Christian faith to set man free from, and to make him largely independent of, the varieties in external circumstances. Christian faith does so, because it brings into a life a sufficient compensation for all losses, limitations, and sorrows, and a good which is the reality of which all earthly goods are but shadows. So the slave may be free in Christ, and the poor man may be rich in Him, and the sad man may be joyful, and the joyful man may be delivered from excess of gladness, and the rich man be kept from the temptations and sins of wealth, and the free man be taught to surrender his liberty to the Lord who makes him free. Thus, if we have the all-sufficient compensation which there is in Jesus Christ, the

satisfaction for all our needs and desires, we do not need to trouble ourselves so much as we sometimes do about these changing things round about us. Let them come, let them go; let the darkness veil the light, and the light illuminate the darkness; let summer and winter alternate; let tribulation and prosperity succeed each other; we have a source of blessedness unaffected by these. Ice may skin the surface of the lake, but deep beneath, the water is at the same temperature in winter and in summer. Storms may sweep the face of the deep, but in the abyss there is calm which is not stagnation. So he that cleaves to Christ is delivered from the slavery that binds men to the details and accidents of outward life.

And if we are the servants of Christ, we shall be set free, in the measure in which we are His, from the slavery which daily becomes more oppressive as the means of communication become more complete, the slavery to popular opinion and to men round us. Dare to be singular; take your beliefs at first hand from the Master. Never mind what fellow-slaves say. It is His smile or frown that is of importance. ‘Ye are bought with a price; be not servants of men.’

And so, brethren, ‘choose you this day whom ye will serve.’ You are not made to be independent. You must serve some thing or person. Recognise the narrow limitations within which your choice lies, and the issues which depend upon it. It is not whether you will serve

Christ or whether you will be free. It is whether you will serve Christ or your own worst self, the world, men, and I was going to add, the flesh and the devil. Make your choice. He has bought you. You belong to Him by His death. Yield yourselves to Him, it is the only way of breaking your chains. He that doeth sin is the servant of sin. 'If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed,' and not only free; for the King's slaves are princes and nobles, and 'all things are yours, and ye are Christ's.' They who say to Him 'O Lord! truly I am Thy servant,' receive from Him the rank of kings and priests to God, and shall reign with Him for ever.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

> 'Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.'—
> 1 COR. vii. 24.

You find that three times within the compass of a very few verses this injunction is repeated. 'As God hath distributed to every man,' says the Apostle in the seventeenth verse, 'as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches.' Then again in the twentieth verse, 'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called.' And then finally in our text.

The reason for this emphatic reiteration is not

difficult to ascertain. There were strong temptations to restlessness besetting the early Christians. The great change from heathenism to Christianity would seem to loosen the joints of all life, and having been swept from their anchorage in religion, all external things would appear to be adrift. It was most natural that a man should seek to alter even the circumstances of his outward life, when such a revolution had separated him from his ancient self. Hence would tend to come the rupture of family ties, the separation of husband and wife, the Jewish convert seeking to become like a Gentile, the Gentile seeking to become like a Jew; the slave trying to be free, the freeman, in some paroxysm of disgust at his former condition, trying to become a slave. These three cases are all referred to in the context—marriage, circumcision, slavery. And for all three the Apostle has the same advice to give—'Stop where you are.' In whatever condition you were when God's invitation drew you to Himself—for that, and not being set to a 'vocation' in life, is the meaning of the word 'called' here—remain in it.

And then, on the other hand, there was every reason why the Apostle and his co-workers should set themselves, by all means in their power, to oppose this restlessness. For, if Christianity in those early days had once degenerated into the mere instrument of social revolution, its development would have been thrown back for centuries, and the whole worth

and power of it, for those who first apprehended it, would have been lost. So you know Paul never said a word to encourage any precipitate attempts to change externals. He let slavery—he let war alone; he let the tyranny of the Roman Empire alone—not because he was a coward, not because he thought that these things were not worth meddling with, but because he, like all wise men, believed in making the tree good and then its fruit good. He believed in the diffusion of the principles which he proclaimed, and the mighty Name which he served, as able to girdle the poison-tree, and to take the bark off it, and the rest, the slow dying, might be left to the work of time. And the same general idea underlies the words of my text. 'Do not try to change,' he says, 'do not trouble about external conditions; keep to your Christian profession; let those alone, they will right themselves. Art thou a slave? Seek not to be freed. Art thou circumcised? Seek not to be uncircumcised. Get hold of the central, vivifying, transmuting influence, and all the rest is a question of time.'

But, besides this more especial application of the words of my text to the primitive times, it carries with it, dear brethren, a large general principle that applies to all times—a principle, I may say, dead in the teeth of the maxims upon which life is being ordered by the most of us. *Our* maxim is, 'Get on!' Paul's is, 'Never mind about getting *on*, get *up*!' Our notion is—'Try to make the circumstances what I would like to have them.' Paul's is—'Leave circumstances to

take care of themselves, or rather leave God to take care of the circumstances. You get close to Him, and hold His hand, and everything else will right itself.' Only he is not preaching stolid acquiescence. His previous injunctions were —'Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.' He sees that that may be misconceived and abused, and so, in his third reiteration of the precept, he puts in a word which throws a flood of light upon the whole thing—'Let every man wherein he is called therein abide.' Yes, but that is not all—'therein abide *with God*!' Ay, that is it! not an impossible stoicism; not hypocritical, fanatical contempt of the external. But whilst that gets its due force and weight, whilst a man yields himself in a measure to the natural tastes and inclinations which God has given him, and with the intention that he should find there subordinate guidance and impulse for his life, still let him abide where he is called with God, and seek to increase his fellowship with Him, as the main thing that he has to do.

I. Thus we are led from the words before us first to the thought that our chief effort in life ought to be union with God.

'Abide with God,' which, being put into other words, means, I think, mainly two things—constant communion, the occupation of all our nature with Him, and, consequently, the recognition of His will in all circumstances.

As to the former, we have the mind and heart and will of God revealed to us for the light, the love, the obedience of our will and heart and mind; and our Apostle's precept is, first, that we should try, moment by moment, in all the bustle and stir of our daily life, to have our whole being consciously directed to and engaged with, fertilised and calmed by contact with, the perfect and infinite nature of our Father in heaven.

As we go to our work again to-morrow morning, what difference would obedience to this precept make upon my life and yours? Before all else, and in the midst of all else, we should think of that Divine Mind that in the heavens is waiting to illumine our darkness; we should feel the glow of that uncreated and perfect Love, which, in the midst of change and treachery, of coldness and of ‘greetings where no kindness is,’ in the midst of masterful authority and unloving command, is ready to fill our hearts with tenderness and tranquillity: we should bow before that Will which is absolute and supreme indeed, but neither arbitrary nor harsh, which is ‘the eternal purpose that He hath purposed in Himself’ indeed, but is also ‘the good pleasure of His goodness and the counsel of His grace.’

And with such a God near to us ever in our faithful thoughts, in our thankful love, in our lowly obedience, with such a mind revealing itself to us, and such a heart opening its hidden

storehouses for us as we approach, like some star that, as one gets nearer to it, expands its disc and glows into rich colour, which at a distance was but pallid silver, and such a will sovereign above all, energising, even through opposition, and making obedience a delight, what room, brethren, would there be in our lives for agitations, and distractions, and regrets, and cares, and fears—what room for earthly hopes or for sad remembrances? They die in the fruition of a present God all-sufficient for mind, and heart, and will—even as the sun when it is risen with a burning heat may scorch and wither the weeds that grow about the base of the fruitful tree, whose deeper roots are but warmed by the rays that ripen the rich clusters which it bears. 'Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide *with God*.'

And then, as a consequence of such an occupation of the whole being with God, there will follow that second element which is included in the precept, namely, the recognition of God's will as operating in and determining all circumstances. When our whole soul is occupied with Him, we shall see Him everywhere. And this ought to be our honest effort—to connect everything which befalls ourselves and the world with Him. We should see that Omnipotent Will, the silent energy which flows through all being, asserting itself through all secondary causes, marching on towards its destined and certain goal, amidst all the whirl and perturbation of events, bending even the antagonism of rebels

and the unconsciousness of godless men, as well as the play of material instruments, to its own purposes, and swinging and swaying the whole set and motion of things according to its own impulse and by the touch of its own fingers.

Such a faith does not require us to overlook the visible occasions for the things which befall us, nor to deny the stable laws according to which that mighty will operates in men's lives. Secondary causes? Yes. Men's opposition and crime? Yes. Our own follies and sins? No doubt. Blessings and sorrows falling indiscriminately on a whole community or a whole world? Certainly. And yet the visible agents are not the sources, but only the vehicles of the power, the belting and shafting which transmit a mighty impulse which they had nothing to do in creating. And the antagonism subserves the purposes of the rule which it opposes, as the blow of the surf may consolidate the sea-wall that it breaks against. And our own follies and sins may indeed sorrowfully shadow our lives, and bring on us pains of body and disasters in fortune, and stings in spirit for which we alone are responsible, and which we have no right to regard as inscrutable judgments—yet even these bitter plants of which our own hands have sowed the seed, spring by His merciful will, and *are* to be regarded as His loving, fatherly chastisements—sent before to warn us by a premonitory experience that ‘the wages of sin is death.’ As a rule, God does not interpose to pick a man out of the mud into which he has been

plunged by his own faults and follies, until he has learned the lessons which he can find in plenty down in the slough, if he will only look for them! And the fact that some great calamity or some great joy affects a wide circle of people, does not make its having a special lesson and meaning for each of them at all doubtful. *There* is one of the great depths of all-moving wisdom and providence, that in the very self-same act it is in one aspect universal, and in another special and individual. The ordinary notion of a special providence goes perilously near the belief that God's will is less concerned in some parts of a man's life than in others. It is very much like desecrating and secularising a whole land by the very act of focussing the sanctity in some single consecrated shrine. But the true belief is that the whole sweep of a life is under the will of God, and that when, for instance, war ravages a nation, though the sufferers be involved in a common ruin occasioned by murderous ambition and measureless pride, yet for each of the sufferers the common disaster has a special message. Let us believe in a divine will which regards each individual caught up in the skirts of the horrible storm, even as it regards each individual on whom the equal rays of His universal sunshine fall. Let us believe that every single soul has a place in the heart, and is taken into account in the purposes of Him who moves the tempest, and makes His sun to shine upon the unthankful and on the good. Let us, in accordance with the counsel of the Apostle here,

first of all try to anchor and rest our own souls fast and firm in God all the day long, that, grasping His hand, we may look out upon all the confused dance of fleeting circumstances and say, 'Thy will is done on earth'—if not yet 'as it is done in heaven,' still done in the issues and events of all—and done with my cheerful obedience and thankful acceptance of its commands and allotments in my own life.

II. The second idea which comes out of these words is this—Such union with God will lead to contented continuance in our place, whatever it be.

Our text is as if Paul had said, 'You have been "called" in such and such worldly circumstances. The fact proves that these circumstances do not obstruct the highest and richest blessings. The light of God can shine on your souls through them. Since then you have such sacred memorials associated with them, and know by experience that fellowship with God is possible in them, do you remain where you are, and keep hold of the God who has visited you in them.'

If once, in accordance with the thoughts already suggested, our minds have, by God's help, been brought into something like real, living fellowship with Him, and we have attained the wisdom that pierces through the external to the Almighty will that underlies all its mazy whirl, then why should we care about shifting our place? Why should we trouble

ourselves about altering these varying events, since each in its turn is a manifestation of His mind and will; each in its turn is a means of discipline for us; and through all their variety a single purpose works, which tends to a single end—'that we should be partakers of His holiness'?

And that is the one point of view from which we can bear to look upon the world and not be utterly bewildered and over-mastered by it. Calmness and central peace are ours; a true appreciation of all outward good and a charm against the bitterest sting of outward evils are ours; a patient continuance in the place where He has set us is ours—when by fellowship with Him we have learned to look upon our work as primarily doing His will, and upon all our possessions and conditions primarily as means for making us like Himself. Most men seem to think that they have gone to the very bottom of the thing when they have classified the gifts of fortune as good or evil, according as they produce pleasure or pain. But that is a poor, superficial classification. It is like taking and arranging books by their bindings and flowers by their colours. Instead of saying, 'We divide life into two halves, and we put there all the joyful, and here all the sad, for that is the ruling distinction'—let us rather say, 'The whole is one, because it all comes from one purpose, and it all tends towards one end. The only question worth asking in regard to the externals of our life is—How far does each thing help me to be a good

man? how far does it open my understanding to apprehend Him? how far does it make my spirit pliable and plastic under His touch? how far does it make me capable of larger reception of greater gifts from Himself? what is its effect in preparing me for that world beyond?' Is there any other greater, more satisfying, more majestic thought of life than this—the scaffolding by which souls are built up into the temple of God? And to care whether a thing is painful or pleasant is as absurd as to care whether the bricklayer's trowel is knocking the sharp corner off a brick, or plastering mortar on the one below it before he lays it carefully on its course. Is the *building* getting on? That is the one question that is worth thinking about.

You and I write our lives as if on one of those manifold writers which you use. A thin filmy sheet *here*, a bit of black paper below it; but the writing goes through upon the next page, and when the blackness that divides two worlds is swept away *there*, the history of each life written by ourselves remains legible in eternity. And the question is—What sort of autobiography are we writing for the revelation of that day, and how far do our circumstances help us to transcribe fair in our lives the will of our God and the image of our Redeemer?

If, then, we have once got hold of that principle that all which is—summer and winter, storm and sunshine, possession and loss, memory and hope, work and rest, and all the

other antitheses of life—is equally the product of His will, equally the manifestation of His mind, equally His means for our discipline, then we have the amulet and talisman which will preserve us from the fever of desire and the shivering fits of anxiety as to things which perish. And, as they tell of a Christian father who, riding by one of the great lakes of Switzerland all day long, on his journey to the Church Council that was absorbing his thoughts, said towards evening to the deacon who was pacing beside him, 'Where is the lake?' so you and I, journeying along by the margin of this great flood of things when wild storms sweep across it, or when the sunbeams glint upon its blue waters, 'and birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave,' will be careless of the changeful sea, if the eye looks beyond the visible and beholds the unseen, the unchanging real presences that make glory in the darkest lives, and 'sunshine in the shady place.' 'Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.'

III. Still further, another thought may be suggested from these words, or rather from the connection in which they occur, and that is—Such contented continuance in our place is the dictate of the truest wisdom.

There are two or three collateral topics, partly suggested by the various connections in which this commandment occurs in the chapter, from which I draw the few remarks I have to make

now.

And the first point I would suggest is that very old commonplace one, so often forgotten, that after all, though you may change about as much as you like, there is a pretty substantial equipoise and identity in the amount of pain and pleasure in all external conditions. The total length of day and night all the year round is the same at the North Pole and at the Equator—half and half. Only, in the one place, it is half and half for four-and-twenty hours at a time, and in the other, the night lasts through gloomy months of winter, and the day is bright for unbroken weeks of summer. But, when you come to add them up at the year's end, the man who shivers in the ice, and the man who pants beneath the beams from the zenith, have had the same length of sunshine and of darkness. It does not matter much at what degrees between the Equator and the Pole you and I live; when the thing comes to be made up we shall be all pretty much upon an equality. You do not get the happiness of the rich man over the poor one by multiplying twenty shillings a week by as many figures as will suffice to make it up to £10,000 a year. What is the use of such eager desires to change our condition, when every condition has disadvantages attending its advantages as certainly as a shadow; and when all have pretty nearly the same quantity of the raw material of pain and pleasure, and when the amount of either actually experienced by us depends not on where we are, but on *what* we are?

Then, still further, there is another consideration to be kept in mind upon which I do not enlarge, as what I have already said involves it—namely, that whilst the portion of external pain and pleasure summed up comes pretty much to the same in everybody's life, any condition may yield the fruit of devout fellowship with God.

Another very remarkable idea suggested by a part of the context is—What is the need for my troubling myself about outward changes when *in Christ* I can get all the peculiarities which make any given position desirable to me? For instance, hear how Paul talks to slaves eager to be set free: 'For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant.' If you generalise that principle it comes to this, that in union with Jesus Christ we possess, by our fellowship with Him, the peculiar excellences and blessings that are derivable from external relations of every sort. To take concrete examples—if a man is a slave, he may be free in Christ. If free, he may have the joy of utter submission to an absolute master in Christ. If you and I are lonely, we may feel all the delights of society by union with Him. If surrounded and distracted by companionship, and seeking for seclusion, we may get all the peace of perfect privacy in fellowship with Him. If we are rich, and sometimes think that we were in a position of less temptation if we were poorer, we may find all the blessings for which we sometimes

covet poverty in communion with Him. If we are poor, and fancy that, if we had a little more just to lift us above the grinding, carking care of to-day and the anxiety of to-morrow, we should be happier, we may find all tranquillity in Him. And so you may run through all the variety of human conditions, and say to yourself—What is the use of looking for blessings flowing from these from without? Enough for us if we grasp that Lord who is all in all, and will give us in peace the joy of conflict, in conflict the calm of peace, in health the refinement of sickness, in sickness the vigour and glow of health, in memory the brightness of undying hope, in hope the calming of holy memory, in wealth the lowliness of poverty, in poverty the ease of wealth; in life and in death being all and more than all that dazzles us by the false gleam of created brightness!

And so, finally—a remark which has no connection with the text itself, but which I cannot avoid inserting here—I want you to think, and think seriously, of the antagonism and diametrical opposition between these principles of my text and the maxims current in the world, and nowhere more so than in this city. Our text is a revolutionary one. It is dead against the watchwords that you fathers give your children—‘push,’ ‘energy,’ ‘advancement,’ ‘get on, whatever you do.’ You have made a philosophy of it, and you say that this restless discontent with a man's present position and eager desire to get a little farther ahead in the

scramble, underlies much modern civilisation and progress, and leads to the diffusion of wealth and to employment for the working classes, and to mechanical inventions, and domestic comforts, and I don't know what besides. You have made a religion of it; and it is thought to be blasphemy for a man to stand up and say—'It is idolatry!' My dear brethren, I declare I solemnly believe that, if I were to go on to the Manchester Exchange next Tuesday, and stand up and say—'There is no God,' I should not be thought half such a fool as if I were to go and say—'Poverty is not an evil *per se*, and men do not come into this world to get *on* but to get *up*—nearer and liker to God.' If you, by God's grace, lay hold of this principle of my text, and honestly resolve to work it out, trusting in that dear Lord who 'though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor,' in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred you will have to make up your minds to let the big prizes of your trade go into other people's hands, and be contented to say—'I live by peaceful, high, pure, Christ-like thoughts.' 'He that needs least,' said an old heathen, 'is nearest the gods'; but I would rather modify the statement into, 'He that needs most, and knows it, is nearest the gods.' For surely Christ is more than mammon; and a spirit nourished by calm desires and holy thoughts into growing virtues and increasing Christlikeness is better than circumstances ordered to our will, in the whirl of which we have lost our God. 'In everything by prayer and

supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God and the God of peace shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.'

'LOVE BUILDETH UP'

'Now, as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 2. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3. But if any man love God, the same is known of him. 4. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. 5. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) 6. But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. 7. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some, with conscience of the idol unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8.

> But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. 9. But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11. And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'—1 COR. viii. 1-13.

It is difficult for us to realise the close connection which existed between idol-worship and daily life. Something of the same sort is found in all mission fields. It was almost impossible for Christians to take any part in society and not seem to sanction idolatry. Would that Christianity were as completely interwoven with our lives as heathen religions are into those of their devotees! Paul seems to have had referred to him a pressing case of conscience, which divided the Corinthian Church, as to whether a Christian could join in the usual feasts

or sacrifices. His answer is in this passage.

The longest way round is sometimes the shortest way home. The Apostle begins far away from the subject in hand by running a contrast between knowledge and love, and setting the latter first. But his contrast is very relevant to his purpose. Small questions should be solved on great principles.

The first principle laid down by Paul is the superiority of love over knowledge, the bearing of which on the question in hand will appear presently. We note that there is first a distinct admission of the Corinthians' intelligence, though there is probably a tinge of irony in the language 'We know that we all have knowledge.' 'You Corinthians are fully aware that you are very superior people. Whatever else you know, you know that, and I fully recognise it.'

The admission is followed by a sudden, sharp comment, to which the Corinthians' knowledge that they knew laid them open. Swift as the thrust of a spear comes flashing 'Knowledge puffeth up.' Puffed-up things are swollen by wind only, and the more they are inflated the hollower and emptier they are; and such a sharp point as Paul's saying shrivels them. The statement is not meant as the assertion of a necessary or uniform result of knowledge, but it does put plainly a very usual result of it, if it is unaccompanied by love. It is a strange, sad result of superior intelligence or acquirements,

that it so often leads to conceit, to a false estimate of the worth and power of knowing, to a ridiculous over-valuing of certain acquirements, and to an insolent contempt and cruel disregard of those who have them not. Paul's dictum has been only too well confirmed by experience.

‘Love builds up,’ or ‘edifies.’ Probably the main direction in which that building up is conceived of as taking effect, is in aiding the progress of our neighbours, especially in the religious life. But the tendency of love to rear a fair fabric of personal character is not to be overlooked. In regard to effect on character, the palm must be given to love, which produces solid excellence far beyond what mere knowledge can effect. Further, that pluming one's self on knowledge is a sure proof of ignorance. The more real our acquirements, the more they disclose our deficiencies. All self-conceit hinders us from growing intellectually or morally, and intellectual conceit is the worst kind of it.

Very significantly, love to God, and not the simple emotion of love without reference to its object, is opposed to knowledge; for love so directed is the foundation of all excellence, and of all real love to men. Love to God is not the antithesis of true knowledge, but it is the only victorious antagonist of the conceit of knowing. Very significantly, too, does Paul vary his conclusion in verse 3 by saying that the man

who loves God ‘is known of Him,’ instead of, as we might have expected, ‘knows Him.’ The latter is true, but the statement in the verse puts more strongly the thought of the man's being an object of God's care. In regard, then, to their effects on character, in producing consideration and helpfulness to others, and in securing God's protection, love stands first, and knowledge second.

What has all this to do with the question in hand? This, that if looked at from the standpoint of knowledge, it may be solved in one way, but if from that of love, it will be answered in another. So, in verses 4-6, Paul treats the matter on the ground of knowledge. The fundamental truth of Christianity, that there is one God, who is revealed and works through Jesus Christ, was accepted by all the Corinthians. Paul states it here broadly, denying that there were any objective realities answering to the popular conceptions or poetic fancies or fair artistic presentments of the many gods and lords of the Greek pantheon, and asserting that all Christians recognise one God, the Father, from whom the universe of worlds and living things has origin, and to whom we as Christians specially belong, and one Lord, the channel through whom all divine operations of creation, providence, and grace flow, and by whose redeeming work we Christians are endowed with our best life. If a believer was fully convinced of these truths, he could partake of sacrificial feasts without danger to himself, and without either sanctioning

idolatry or being tempted to return to it.

No doubt it was on this ground that an idol was nothing that the laxer party defended their action in eating meat offered to idols; and Paul fully recognises that they had a strong case, and that, if there were no other considerations to come in, the answer to the question of conscience submitted to him would be wholly in favour of the less scrupulous section. But there is something better than knowledge; namely, love. And its decision must be taken before the whole material for a judgment is in evidence.

Therefore, in the remainder of the chapter, Paul dwells on loving regard for brethren. In verse 7, he reminds the 'knowing' Corinthians that new convictions do not obliterate the power of old associations. The awful fascination of early belief still exercises influence. The chains are not wholly broken off. Every mission field shows examples of this. Every man knows that habits are not so suddenly overcome, that there is no hankering after them or liability to relapse. It would be a dangerous thing for a weak believer to risk sharing in an idol feast; for he would be very likely to slide down to his old level of belief, and Zeus or Pallas to seem to him real powers once more.

The considerations in verse 7 would naturally be followed by the further thoughts in verse 9, etc. But, before dealing with these, Paul interposes another thought in verse 8, to the

effect that partaking of or abstinence from any kind of food will not, in itself, either help or hinder the religious life. The bearing of that principle on his argument seems to be to reduce the importance of the whole question, and to suggest that, since eating of idol sacrifices could not be called a duty or a means of spiritual progress, the way was open to take account of others' weakness as determining our action in regard to it. A modern application may illustrate the point. Suppose that a Christian does not see total abstinence from intoxicants to be obligatory on him. Well, he cannot say that drinking is so, or that it is a religious duty, and so the way is clear for urging regard to others' weakness as an element in the case.

That being premised, Paul comes to his final point; namely, that Christian men are bound to restrict their liberty so that they shall not tempt weaker brethren on to a path on which they cannot walk without stumbling. He has just shown the danger to such of partaking of the sacrificial feasts. He now completes his position by showing, in verse 10, that the stronger man's example may lead the weaker to do what he cannot do innocently. What is harmless to us may be fatal to others, and, if we have led them to it, their blood is on our heads.

The terrible discordance of such conduct with our Lord's example, which should be our law, is forcibly set forth in verse 11, which has three strongly emphasised thoughts—the man's fate—

he perishes; his relation to his slayer—a brother; what Christ did for the man whom a Christian has sent to destruction—died for him. These solemn thoughts are deepened in verse 12, which reminds us of the intimate union between the weakest and Christ, by which He so identifies Himself with them that any blow struck on them touches Him.

There is no greater sin than to tempt weak or ignorant Christians to thoughts or acts which their ignorance or weakness cannot entertain or do without damage to their religion. There is much need for laying that truth to heart in these days. Both in the field of speculation and of conduct, Christians, who think that they know so much better than ignorant believers, need to be reminded of it.

So Paul, in verse 13, at last answers the question. His sudden turning to his own conduct is beautiful. He will not so much command others, as proclaim his own determination. He does so with characteristic vehemence and hyperbole. No doubt the liberal party in Corinth were ready to complain against the proposal to restrict their freedom because of others' weakness; and they would be disarmed, or at least silenced, and might be stimulated to like noble resolution, by Paul's example.

The principle plainly laid down here is as distinctly applicable to the modern question of abstinence from intoxicants. No one can doubt

that 'moderation' in their use by some tempts others to use which soon becomes fatally immoderate. The Church has been robbed of promising members thereby, over and over again. How can a Christian man cling to a 'moderate' use of these things, and run the risk of destroying by his example a brother for whom Christ died?

THE SIN OF SILENCE

> 'For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel! 17. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.'—1 COR. ix. 16, 17.

The original reference of these words is to the Apostle's principle and practice of not receiving for his support money from the churches. Gifts he did accept; pay he did not. The exposition of his reason is interesting, ingenuous, and chivalrous. He strongly asserts his right, even while he as strongly declares that he will waive it. The reason for his waiving it is that he desires to have somewhat in his service beyond the strict line of his duty. His preaching itself, with all its toils and miseries, was but part of his day's work, which he was bidden to do, and for doing which he deserved no thanks nor praise. But he

would like to have a little bit of glad service over and above what he is ordered to do, that, as he ingenuously says, he may have 'somewhat to boast of.'

In this exposition of motives we have two great principles actuating the Apostle—one, his profound sense of obligation, and the other his desire, if it might be, to do more than he was bound to do, because he loved his work so much. And though he is speaking here as an apostle, and his example is not to be unconditionally transferred to us, yet I think that the motives which actuated his conduct are capable of unconditional application to ourselves.

There are three things here. There is the obligation of speech, there is the penalty of silence, and there is the glad obedience which transcends obligation.

I. First, mark the obligation of speech.

No doubt the Apostle had, in a special sense, a 'necessity laid upon' him, which was first laid upon him on that road to Damascus, and repeated many a time in his life. But though he differs from us in the direct supernatural commission which was given to him, in the width of the sphere in which he had to work, and in the splendour of the gifts which were entrusted to his stewardship, he does not differ from us in the reality of the obligation which was laid upon him. Every Christian man is as

truly bound as was Paul to preach the Gospel. The commission does not depend upon apostolic dignity. Jesus Christ, when He said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,' was not speaking to the eleven, but to all generations of His Church. And whilst there are many other motives on which we may rest the Christian duty of propagating the Christian faith, I think that we shall be all the better if we bottom it upon this, the distinct and definite commandment of Jesus Christ, the grip of which encloses all who for themselves have found that the Lord is gracious.

For that commandment is permanent. It is exactly contemporaneous with the duration of the promise which is appended to it, and whosoever suns himself in the light of the latter is bound by the precept of the former. 'Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,' defines the duration of the promise, and it defines also the duration of the duty. Nay, even the promise is made conditional upon the discharge of the duty enjoined. For it is to the Church 'going into all the world, and preaching the Gospel to every creature,' that the promise of an abiding presence is made.

Let us remember, too, that, just because this commission is given to the whole Church, it is binding on every individual member of the Church. There is a very common fallacy, not confined to this subject, but extending over the whole field of Christian duty, by which things

that are obligatory on the community are shuffled off the shoulders of the individual. But we have to remember that the whole Church is nothing more than the sum total of all its members, and that nothing is incumbent upon it which is not in their measure incumbent upon each of them. Whatsoever Christ says to all, He says to each, and the community has no duties which you and I have not.

Of course, there are diversities of forms of obedience to this commandment; of course, the restrictions of locality and the other obligations of life, come in to modify it; and it is not every man's duty to wander over the whole world doing this work. But the direct work of communicating to others who know it not the sweetness and the power of Jesus Christ belongs to every Christian man. You cannot buy yourselves out of the ranks, as they used to be able to do out of the militia, by paying for a substitute. Both forms of service are obligatory upon each of us. We all, if we know anything of Christ and His love and His power, are bound, by the fact that we do know it, to tell it to those whom we can reach. You have all got congregations if you would look for them. There is not a Christian man or woman in this world who has not somebody that he or she can speak to more efficiently than anybody else can. You have your friends, your relations, the people with whom you are brought into daily contact, if you have no wider congregations. You cannot all stand up and preach in the sense in which I do

so. But this is not the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It does not imply a pulpit, nor a set discourse, nor a gathered multitude; it simply implies a herald's task of proclaiming. Everybody who has found Jesus Christ can say, 'I have found the Messiah,' and everybody who knows Him can say, 'Come and hear, and I will tell what the Lord hath done for my soul.' Since you can do it you are bound to do it; and if you are one of 'the dumb dogs, lying down and loving to slumber,' of whom there are such crowds paralysing the energies and weakening the witness of every Church upon earth, then you are criminally and suicidally oblivious of an obligation which is a joy and a privilege as much as a duty.

Oh, brethren! I do want to lay on the consciences of all you Christian people this, that nothing can absolve you from the obligation of personal, direct speech to some one of Christ and His salvation. Unless you can say, 'I have not refrained my lips, O Lord! Thou knowest,' there frowns over against you an unfulfilled duty, the neglect of which is laming your spiritual activity, and drying up the sources of your spiritual strength.

But, then, besides this direct effort, there are the other indirect methods in which this commandment can be discharged, by sympathy and help of all sorts, about which I need say no more here.

Jesus Christ's ideal of His Church was an active propaganda, an army in which there were no non-combatants, even although some of the combatants might be detailed to remain in the camp and look after the stuff, and others of them might be in the forefront of the battle. But is that ideal ever fulfilled in any of our churches? How many amongst us there are who do absolutely nothing in the shape of Christian work! Some of us seem to think that the voluntary principle on which our Nonconformist churches are largely organised means, 'I do not need to do anything unless I like. Inclination is the guide of duty, and if I do not care to take any active part in the work of our church, nobody has anything to say.' No man can force me, but if Jesus Christ says to me, 'Go!' and I say, 'I had rather not,' Jesus Christ and I have to settle accounts between us. The less *men* control, the more stringent ought to be the control of Christ. And if the principle of Christian obedience is a willing heart, then the duty of a Christian is to see that the heart is willing.

A stringent obligation, not to be shuffled off by any of the excuses that we make, is laid upon us all. It makes very short work of a number of excuses. There is a great deal in the tone of this generation which tends to chill the missionary spirit. We know more about the heathen world, and familiarity diminishes horror. We have taken up, many of us, milder and more merciful ideas about the condition of those who die without knowing the name of Jesus Christ. We

have taken to the study of comparative religion as a science, forgetting sometimes that the thing that we are studying as a science is spreading a dark cloud of ignorance and apathy over millions of men. And all these reasons somewhat sap the strength and cool the fervour of a good many Christian people nowadays. Jesus Christ's commandment remains just as it was.

Then some of us say, ‘I prefer working at home!’ Well, if you are doing all that you can there, and really are enthusiastically devoted to one phase of Christian service, the great principle of division of labour comes in to warrant your not entering upon other fields which others cultivate. But unless you are thus casting all your energies into the work which you say that you prefer, there is no reason in it why you should do nothing in the other direction. Jesus Christ still says, ‘Go ye into all the world.’

Then some of you say, ‘Well, I do not much believe in your missionary societies. There is a great deal of waste of money about them. A number of things there are that one does not approve of. I have heard stories about missionaries being very idle, very luxurious, and taking too much pay, and doing too little work.’ Well, be it so! Very probably it is partly true; though I do not know that the people whose testimony is so willingly accepted, to the detriment of our brethren in foreign lands, are precisely the kind of people that should talk

much about self-sacrifice and luxurious living, or whose estimate of Christian work is to be relied upon. I fancy many of them, if they walked about the streets of an English town, would have a somewhat similar report to give, as they have when they walk about the streets of an Indian one. But be that as it may, does that indictment draw a wet sponge across the commandment of Jesus Christ? or can you chisel out of the stones of Sinai one of the words written there, by reason of the imperfections of those who are seeking to obey them? Surely not! Christ still says, 'Go ye into all the world!'

I sometimes venture to think that the day will come when the condition of being received into, and retained in, the communion of a Christian church will be obedience to that commandment. Why, even bees have the sense at a given time of the year to turn the drones out of the hives, and sting them to death. I do not recommend the last part of the process, but I am not sure but that it would be a benefit to us all, both to those ejected and to those retained, that we should get rid of that added weight that clogs every organised community in this and other lands—the dead weight of idlers who say that they are Christ's disciples. Whether it is a condition of church membership or not, sure I am that it is a condition of fellowship with Jesus Christ, and a condition, therefore, of health in the Christian life, that it should be a life of active obedience to this plain, imperative, permanent, and universal command.

II. Secondly, a word as to the penalty of silence.

‘Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.’ I suppose Paul is thinking mainly of a future issue, but not exclusively of that. At all events, let me point you, in a word or two, to the plain penalties of silence here, and to the awful penalties of silence hereafter.

‘Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.’ If you are a dumb and idle professor of Christ's truth, depend upon it that your dumb idleness will rob you of much communion with Jesus Christ. There are many Christians who would be ever so much happier, more joyous, and more assured Christians if they would go and talk about Christ to other people. Because they have locked up God's word in their hearts it melts away unknown, and they lose more than they suspect of the sweetness and buoyancy and assured confidence that might mark them, for no other reason than because they seek to keep their morsel to themselves. Like that mist that lies white and dull over the ground on a winter's morning, which will be blown away with the least puff of fresh air, there lie doleful dampnesses, in their sooty folds, over many a Christian heart, shutting out the sun from the earth, and a little whiff of wholesome activity in Christ's cause would clear them all away, and the sun would shine down upon men again. If you want to be a happy Christian, work for Jesus Christ. I do not lay that down as a specific by

itself. There are other things to be taken in conjunction with it, but yet it remains true that the woe of a languid Christianity attaches to the men who, being professing Christians, are silent when they should speak, and idle when they should work.

There is, further, the woe of the loss of sympathies, and the gain of all the discomforts and miseries of a self-absorbed life. And there is, further, the woe of the loss of one of the best ways of confirming one's own faith in the truth —viz. that of seeking to impart it to others. If you want to learn a thing, teach it. If you want to grasp the principles of any science, try to explain it to somebody who does not understand it. If you want to know where, in these days of jangling and controversy, the true, vital centre of the Gospel is, and what is the essential part of the revelation of God, go and tell sinful men about Jesus Christ who died for them; and you will find out that it is the Cross, and Him who died thereon, as dying for the world, that is the power which can move men's hearts. And so you will cleave with a closer grasp, in days of difficulty and unsettlement, to that which is able to bring light into darkness and to harmonise the discord of a troubled and sinful soul. And, further, there is the woe of having none that can look to you and say, ‘I owe myself to thee.’ Oh, brethren! there is no greater joy accessible to a man than that of feeling that through his poor words Christ has entered into a brother's heart. And you are throwing away all this because you

shut your mouths and neglect the plain commandment of your Lord.

Ay! but that is not all. There is a future to be taken into account, and I think that Christian people do far too little realise the solemn truth that it is not all the same *then* whether a man has kept his Master's commandments or neglected them. I believe that whilst a very imperfect faith saves a man, there is such a thing as being ‘saved, yet so as through fire,’ and that there is such a thing as having ‘an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom.’ He whose life has been very slightly influenced by Christian principle, and who has neglected plain, imperative duties, will not stand on the same level of blessedness as the man who has more completely yielded himself in life to the constraining power of Christ's love, and has sought to keep all His commandments.

Heaven is not a dead level. Every man there will receive as much blessedness as he is capable of, but capacities will vary, and the principal factor in determining the capacity, which capacity determines the blessedness, will be the thoroughness of obedience to all the ordinances of Christ in the course of the life upon earth. So, though we know, and therefore dare say, little about that future, I do beseech you to take this to heart, that he who there can stand before God, and say, ‘Behold! I and the children whom God hath given me’ will wear a crown brighter than the starless ones of those who saved

themselves, and have brought none with them.

'Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all came safe to land.' But the place where they stand depends on their Christian life, and of that Christian life one main element is obedience to the commandment which makes them the apostles and missionaries of their Lord.

III. Lastly, note the glad obedience which transcends the limits of obligation.

'If I do this thing willingly I have a reward.' Paul desired to bring a little more than was required, in token of his love to his Master, and of his thankful acceptance of the obligation. The artist who loves his work will put more work into his picture than is absolutely needed, and will linger over it, lavishing diligence and care upon it, because he is in love with his task. The servant who seeks to do as little as he can scrape through with without rebuke is actuated by no high motives. The trader who barely puts as much into the scale as will balance the weight in the other is grudging in his dealings; but he who, with liberal hand, gives 'shaken down, pressed together, and running over' measure, gives because he delights in the giving.

And so it is in the Christian life. There are many of us whose question seems to be, 'How little can I get off with? how much can I retain?'—many of us whose effort is to find out how much of the world is consistent with the

profession of Christianity, and to find the minimum of effort, of love, of service, of gifts which may free us from obligation.

And what does that mean? It means that we are slaves. It means that if we durst we would give nothing, and do nothing. And what does that mean? It means that we do not care for the Lord, and have no joy in our work. And what does that mean? It means that our work deserves no praise, and will get no reward. If we love Christ we shall be anxious, if it were possible, to do more than He commands us, in token of our loyalty to the King, and of our delight in the service. Of course, in the highest view, nothing can be more than necessary. Of course He has the right to all our work; but yet there are heights of Christian consecration and self-sacrifice which a man will not be blamed if he has not climbed, and will be praised if he has. What we want, if I might venture to say so, is extravagance of service. Judas may say, ‘To what purpose is this waste?’ but Jesus will say, He ‘hath wrought a good work on Me,’ and the fragrance of the ointment will smell sweet through the centuries.

So, dear brethren, the upshot of the whole thing is, Do not let us do our Christian work reluctantly, else it is only slave's work, and there is no blessing in it, and no reward will come to us from it. Do not let us ask, ‘How little may I do?’ but ‘How much can I do?’ Thus, asking, we shall not offer as burnt offering to the Lord that

which doth cost us nothing. On His part He has given the commandment as a sign of His love. The stewardship is a token that He trusts us, the duty is an honour, the burden is a grace. On our parts let us seek for the joy of service which is not contented with the bare amount of the tribute that is demanded, but gives something over, if it were possible, because of our love to Him. They who thus give to Jesus Christ their all of love and effort and service will receive it all back a hundredfold, for the Master is not going to be in debt to any of His servants, and He says to them all, 'I will repay it, howbeit I say not unto thee how thou owest unto Me even thine own self besides.'

A SERVANT OF MEN

'For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain

> the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.'—1 COR. ix. 19-23.

Paul speaks much of himself, but he is not an egotist. When he says, 'I do so and so,' it is a gracious way of enjoining the same conduct on his readers. He will lay no burden on them which he does not himself carry. The leader who can say 'Come' is not likely to want followers. So, in this section, the Apostle is really enjoining on the Corinthians the conduct which he declares is his own.

The great principle incumbent on all Christians, with a view to the salvation of others, is to go as far as one can without untruthfulness in the direction of finding points of resemblance and contact with those to whom we would commend the Gospel. There is a base counterfeit of this apostolic example, which slurs over distinctive beliefs, and weakly tries to please everybody by differing from nobody. That trimming to catch all winds never gains any. Mr. Facing-both-ways is not a powerful evangelist. The motive of becoming all things to all men must be plainly disinterested, and the assimilation must have love for the souls concerned and eagerness to bring the truth to them, and them to the truth, legibly stamped upon it, or it will be regarded, and rightly so, as

mere cowardice or dishonesty. And there must be no stretching the assimilation to the length of either concealing truth or fraternising in evil. Love to my neighbour can never lead to my joining him in wrongdoing.

But, while the limits of this assumption of the colour of our surroundings are plainly marked, there is ample space within these for the exercise of this eminently Christian grace. We must get near people if we would help them. Especially must we identify ourselves with them in sympathy, and seek to multiply points of assimilation, if we would draw them to Jesus Christ. He Himself had to become man that He might gain men, and His servants have to do likewise, in their degree. The old story of the Christian teacher who voluntarily became a slave, that he might tell of Christ to slaves, has in spirit to be repeated by us all.

We can do no good by standing aloof on a height and flinging down the Gospel to the people below. They must feel that we enter into their circumstances, prejudices, ways of thinking, and the like, if our words are to have power. That is true about all Christian teachers, whether of old or young. You must be a boy among boys, and try to show that you enter into the boy's nature, or you may lecture till doomsday and do no good.

Paul instances three cases in which he had acted, and still continued to do so, on this

principle. He was a Jew, but after his conversion he had to ‘become a Jew’ by a distinct act; that is, he had receded so far from his old self, that he, if he had had only himself to think of, would have given up all Jewish observances. But he felt it his duty to conciliate prejudice as far as he could, and so, though he would have fought to the death rather than given countenance to the belief that circumcision was necessary, he had no scruple about circumcising Timothy; and, though he believed that for Christians the whole ancient ritual was abolished, he was quite willing, if it would smooth away the prejudices of the ‘many thousands of Jews who believed,’ to show, by his participation in the temple worship, that he ‘walked orderly, keeping the law.’ If he was told ‘You must,’ his answer could only be ‘I will not’; but if it was a question of conciliating, he was ready to go all lengths for that.

The category which he names next is not composed of different persons from the first, but of the same persons regarded from a somewhat different point of view. ‘Them that are under the law’ describes Jews, not by their race, but by their religion; and Paul was willing to take his place among them, as we have just observed. But he will not do that so as to be misunderstood, wherefore he protests that in doing so he is voluntarily abridging his freedom for a specific purpose. He is not ‘under the law’; for the very pith of his view of the Christian's position is that he has nothing to do with that

Mosaic law in any of its parts, because Christ has made him free.

The second class to whom in his wide sympathies he is able to assimilate himself, is the opposite of the former—the Gentiles who are 'without law.' He did not preach on Mars' Hill as he did in the synagogues. The many-sided Gospel had aspects fitted for the Gentiles who had never heard of Moses, and the many-sided Apostle had links of likeness to the Greek and the barbarian. But here, too, his assimilation of himself to those whom he seeks to win is voluntary; wherefore he protests that he is not without law, though he recognises no longer the obligations of Moses' law, for he is 'under [or, rather, "in"] law to Christ.'

'The weak' are those too scrupulous-conscienced Christians of whom he has been speaking in chapter viii. and whose narrow views he exhorted stronger brethren to respect, and to refrain from doing what they could do without harming their own consciences, lest by doing it they should induce a brother to do the same, whose conscience would prick him for it. That is a lesson needed to-day as much as, or more than, in Paul's time, for the widely different degrees of culture and diversities of condition, training, and associations among Christians now necessarily result in very diverse views of Christian conduct in many matters. The grand principle laid down here should guide us all, both in regard to fellow-Christians and

others. Make yourself as like them as you honestly can; restrict yourself of allowable acts, in deference to even narrow prejudices; but let the motive of your assimilating yourself to others be clearly their highest good, that you may 'gain' them, not for yourself but for your Master.

Verse 23 lays down Paul's ruling principle, which both impelled him to become all things to all men, with a view to their salvation, as he has been saying, and urged him to effort and self-discipline, with a view to his own, as he goes on to say. 'For the Gospel's sake' seems to point backward; 'that I may be a joint partaker thereof points forward. We have not only to preach the Gospel to others, but to live on it and be saved by it ourselves.

HOW THE VICTOR RUNS

> 'So run, that ye may obtain.'—1 COR. ix. 24.

'*So* run.' Does that mean 'Run so that ye obtain?' Most people, I suppose, superficially reading the words, attach that significance to them, but the 'so' here carries a much greater weight of meaning than that. It is a word of comparison. The Apostle would have the Corinthians recall the picture which he has been putting before them—a picture of a scene that

was very familiar to them; for, as most of us know, one of the most important of the Grecian games was celebrated at intervals in the immediate neighbourhood of Corinth. Many of the Corinthian converts had, no doubt, seen, or even taken part in them. The previous portion of the verse in which our text occurs appeals to the Corinthians' familiar knowledge of the arena and the competitors, 'Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?' He would have them picture the eager racers, with every muscle strained, and the one victor starting to the front; and then he says, 'Look at that panting conqueror. That is how you should run. *So* run—'meaning thereby not, 'Run so that you may obtain the prize,' but 'Run so' as the victor does, 'in order that you may obtain.' So, then, this victor is to be a lesson to us, and we are to take a leaf out of his book. Let us see what he teaches us.

I. The first thing is, the utmost tension and energy and strenuous effort.

It is very remarkable that Paul should pick out these Grecian games as containing for Christian people any lesson, for they were honeycombed, through and through, with idolatry and all sorts of immorality, so that no Jew ventured to go near them, and it was part of the discipline of the early Christian Church that professing Christians should have nothing to do with them in any shape.

And yet here, as in many other parts of his letters, Paul takes these foul things as patterns for Christians. 'There is a soul of goodness in things evil, if we would observantly distil it out.' It is very much as if English preachers were to refer their people to a racecourse, and say, 'Even there you may pick out lessons, and learn something of the way in which Christian people ought to live.'

On the same principle the New Testament deals with that diabolical business of fighting. It is taken as an emblem for the Christian soldier, because, with all its devilishness, there is in it this, at least, that men give themselves up absolutely to the will of their commander, and are ready to fling away their lives if he lifts his finger. That at least is grand and noble, and to be imitated on a higher plane.

In like manner Paul takes these poor racers as teaching us a lesson. Though the thing be all full of sin, we can get one valuable thought out of it, and it is this—If people would work half as hard to gain the highest object that a man can set before him, as hundreds of people are ready to do in order to gain trivial and paltry objects, there would be fewer stunted and half-dead Christians amongst us. 'That is the way to run,' says Paul, 'if you want to obtain.'

Look at the contrast that he hints at, between the prize that stirs these racers' energies into such tremendous operation and the prize which

Christians profess to be pursuing. 'They do it to obtain a corruptible crown'—a twist of pine branch out of the neighbouring grove, worth half-a-farthing, and a little passing glory not worth much more. They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; we do *not* do it, though we professedly have an incorruptible one as our aim and object. If we contrast the relative values of the objects that men pursue so eagerly, and the objects of the Christian course, surely we ought to be smitten down with penitent consciousness of our own unworthiness, if not of our own hypocrisy.

It is not even there that the lesson stops, because we Christian people may be patterns and rebukes to ourselves. For, on the one side of our nature we show what we can do when we are really in earnest about getting something; and on the other side we show with how little work we can be contented, when, at bottom, we do not much care whether we get the prize or not. If you and I really believed that that crown of glory which Paul speaks about might be ours, and would be all sufficing for us if it were ours, as truly as we believe that money is a good thing, there would not be such a difference between the way in which we clutch at the one and the apathy which scarcely cares to put out a hand for the other. The things that are seen and temporal do get the larger portion of the energies and thoughts of the average Christian man, and the things that are unseen and eternal get only what is left. Sometimes ninety per cent.

of the water of a stream is taken away to drive a milldam or do work, and only ten per cent. can be spared to trickle down the half-dry channel and do nothing but reflect the bright sun and help the little flowers and the grass to grow. So, the larger portion of most lives goes to drive the mill-wheels, and there is very little left, in the case of many of us, in order to help us towards God, and bring us closer into communion with our Lord. 'Run' for the crown as eagerly as you 'run' for your incomes, or for anything that you really, in your deepest desires, want. Take yourselves for your own patterns and your own rebukes. Your own lives may show you how you *can* love, hope, work, and deny yourselves when you have sufficient inducement, and their flame should put to shame their frost, for the warmth is directed towards trifles and the coldness towards the crown. If you would run for the incorruptible prize of effort in the fashion in which others and yourselves run for the corruptible, your whole lives would be changed. Why! if Christian people in general really took half—half? ay! a tenth part of—the honest, persistent pains to improve their Christian character, and become more like Jesus Christ, which a violinist will take to master his instrument, there would be a new life for most of our Christian communities. Hours and hours of patient practice are not too much for the one; how many moments do we give to the other? 'So run, that ye obtain.'

II. The victorious runner sets Christians an

example of rigid self-control.

Every man that is striving for the mastery is 'temperate in all things.' The discipline for runners and athletes was rigid. They had ten months of spare diet—no wine—hard gymnastic exercises every day, until not an ounce of superfluous flesh was upon their muscles, before they were allowed to run in the arena. And, says Paul, that is the example for us. They practise this rigid discipline and abstinence by way of preparation for the race, and after it was run they might dispense with the training. You and I have to practise rigid abstinence as part of the race, as a continuous necessity. *They* did not abstain only from bad things, they did not only avoid criminal acts of sensuous indulgence; but they abstained from many perfectly legitimate things. So for us it is not enough to say, 'I draw the line there, at this or that vice, and I will have nothing to do with these.' You will never make a growing Christian if abstinence from palpable sins only is your standard. You must 'lay aside' every sin, of course, but also 'every *weight*' Many things are 'weights' that are not 'sins'; and if we are to run fast we must run light, and if we are to do any good in this world we have to live by rigid control and abstain from much that is perfectly legitimate, because, if we do not, we shall fail in accomplishing the highest purposes for which we are here. Not only in regard to the gross sensual indulgences which these men had to avoid, but in regard to a great deal of the outgoings of our interests and

our hearts, we have to apply the knife very closely and cut to the quick, if we would have leisure and sympathy and affection left for loftier objects. It is a very easy thing to be a Christian in one aspect, inasmuch as a Christian at bottom is a man that is trusting to Jesus Christ, and that is not hard to do. It is a very hard thing to be a Christian in another aspect, because a real Christian is a man who, by reason of his trusting Jesus Christ, has set his heel upon the neck of the animal that is in him, and keeps the flesh well down, and not only the flesh, but the desires of the mind as well as of the flesh, and subordinates them all to the one aim of pleasing Him. 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life' if his object is to please Him that has called him to be a soldier. Unless we cut off a great many of the thorns, so to speak, by which things catch hold of us as we pass them, we shall not make much advance in the Christian life. Rigid self-control and abstinence from else legitimate things that draw us away from Him are needful, if we are so to run as the poor heathen racer teaches us.

III. The last grace that is suggested here, the last leaf to take out of these racers' book, is definiteness and concentration of aim.

'I, therefore,' says the Apostle, 'so run not as uncertainly.' If the runner is now heading that way and now this, making all manner of loops upon his path, of course he will be left hopelessly in the rear. It is the old fable of the

Grecian mythology transplanted into Christian soil. The runner who turned aside to pick up the golden apple was disappointed of his hopes of the radiant fair. The ship, at the helm of which is a steersman who has either a feeble hand or does not understand his business, and which therefore keeps yawing from side to side, with the bows pointing now this way and now that, is not holding a course that will make the harbour first in the race. The people that to-day are marching with their faces towards Zion, and to-morrow making a loop-line to the world, will be a long time before they reach their terminus. I believe there are few things more lacking in the average Christian life of to-day than resolute, conscious concentration upon an aim which is clearly and always before us. Do you know what you are aiming at? That is the first question. Have you a distinct theory of life's purpose that you can put into half a dozen words, or have you not? In the one case, there is some chance of attaining your object; in the other one, none. Alas! we find many Christian people who do not set before themselves, with emphasis and constancy, as their aim the doing of God's will, and so sometimes they do it, when it happens to be easy, and sometimes, when temptations are strong, they do not. It needs a strong hand on the tiller to keep it steady when the wind is blowing in puffs and gusts, and sometimes the sail bellies full and sometimes it is almost empty. The various strengths of the temptations that blow us out of our course are such that we

shall never keep a straight line of direction, which is the shortest line, and the only one on which we shall ‘obtain,’ unless we know very distinctly where we want to go, and have a good strong will that has learned to say ‘No!’ when the temptations come. ‘Whom resist steadfast in the faith.’ ‘I therefore so run, not as uncertainly,’ taking one course one day and another the next.

Now, that definite aim is one that can be equally pursued in all varieties of life. ‘This one thing I do’ said one who did about as many things as most people, but the different kinds of things that Paul did were all, at bottom, one thing. And we, in all the varieties of our circumstances, may keep this one clear aim before us, and whether it be in this way or in that, we may be equally and at all times seeking the better country, and bending all circumstances and all duty to make us more like our Master and bring us closer to Him.

The Psalmist did not offer an impossible prayer when he said: ‘One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple.’ Was David in ‘the house of the Lord’ when he was with his sheep in the wilderness, and when he was in Saul's palace, and when he was living with wild beasts in dens and caves of the earth, and when he was a fugitive, hunted like a partridge upon the mountains? Was he always in the Lord's house?

Yes! At any rate he could be. All that we do may be doing His will, and over a life, crowded with varying circumstances and yet simplified and made blessed by unvarying obedience, we may write, 'This one thing I do.'

But we shall not keep this one aim clear before our eyes, unless we habituate ourselves to the contemplation of the end. The runner, according to Paul's vivid picture in another of his letters, forgets the things that are behind, and stretches out towards the things that are before. And just as a man runs with his body inclining forward, and his eager hand nearer the prize than his body, and his eyesight and his heart travelling ahead of them both to grasp it, so if we want to live with the one worthy aim for ours, and to put all our effort and faith into what deserves it all—the Christian race—we must bring clear before us continually, or at least with the utmost frequency, the prize of our high calling, the crown of righteousness. Then we shall run so that we may, at the last, be able to finish our course with joy, and dying to hope with all humility that there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness.

'CONCERNING THE CROWN'

'They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we are incorruptible.'—1 COR. ix. 25.

One of the most famous of the Greek athletic festivals was held close by Corinth. Its prize was a pine-wreath from the neighbouring sacred grove. The painful abstinence and training of ten months, and the fierce struggle of ten minutes, had for their result a twist of green leaves, that withered in a week, and a little fading fame that was worth scarcely more, and lasted scarcely longer. The struggle and the discipline were noble; the end was contemptible. And so it is with all lives whose aims are lower than the highest. They are greater in the powers they put forth than in the objects they compass, and the question, 'What is it for?' is like a douche of cold water from the cart that lays the clouds of dust in the ways.

So, says Paul, praising the effort and contemning the prize, 'They do it to obtain a corruptible crown.' And yet there was a soul of goodness in this evil thing. Though these festivals were indissolubly intertwined with idolatry, and besmirched with much sensuous evil, yet he deals with them as he does with war and with slavery; points to the disguised nobility that lay beneath the hideousness, and holds up even these low things as a pattern for Christian men.

But I do not mean here to speak so much about the general bearing of this text as rather to deal with its designation of the aim and reward of Christian energy, that 'incorruptible crown' of which my text speaks. And in doing so

I desire to take into account likewise other places in Scripture in which the same metaphor occurs.

I. The crown.

Let me recall the other places where the same metaphor is employed. We find the Apostle, in the immediate prospect of death, rising into a calm rapture in which imprisonment and martyrdom lose their terrors, as he thinks of the 'crown of righteousness' which the Lord will give to him. The Epistle of James, again, assures the man who endures temptation that 'the Lord will give him the crown of life which He has promised to all them that love Him.' The Lord Himself from heaven repeats that promise to the persecuted Church at Smyrna: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' The elders cast their crowns before the feet of Him that sitteth upon the throne. The Apostle Peter, in his letter, stimulates the elders upon earth to faithful discharge of their duty, by the hope that thereby they shall 'receive a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away.' So all these instances taken together with this of my text enable us to gather two or three lessons.

It is extremely unlikely that all these instances of the occurrence of the emblem carry with them reference, such as that in my text, to the prize at the athletic festivals. For Peter and James, intense Jews as they were, had probably never seen, and possibly never heard of, the

struggles at the Isthmus and at Olympus and elsewhere. The Book of the Revelation draws its metaphors almost exclusively from the circle of Jewish practices and things. So that we have to look in other directions than the arena or the racecourse to explain these other uses of the image. It is also extremely unlikely that in these other passages the reference is to a crown as the emblem of sovereignty, for that idea is expressed, as a rule, by another word in Scripture, which we have Anglicised as ‘diadem.’ The ‘crown’ in all these passages is a garland twisted out of some growth of the field. In ancient usage roses were twined for revellers; pine-shoots or olive branches for the victors in the games; while the laurel was ‘the meed of mighty conquerors’; and plaited oak leaves were laid upon the brows of citizens who had deserved well of their country, and myrtle sprays crowned the fair locks of the bride.

And thus in these directions, and not towards the wrestling ground or the throne of the monarch, must we look for the ideas suggested by the emblem.

Now, if we gather together all these various uses of the word, there emerge two broad ideas, that the ‘crown’ which is the Christian's aim symbolises a state of triumphant repose and of festal enjoyment. There are other aspects of that great and dim future which correspond to other necessities of our nature, and I suppose some harm has been done and some misconceptions

have been induced, and some unreality imported into the idea of the Christian future, by the too exclusive prominence given to these two ideas—victorious rest after the struggle, and abundant satisfaction of all desires. That future is other and more than a festival; it is other and more than repose. There are larger fields there for the operation of powers that have been trained and evolved here. The faithfulness of the steward is exchanged, according to Christ's great words, for the authority of the ruler over many cities. But still, do we not all know enough of the worry and turbulence and strained effort of the conflict here below, to feel that to some of our deepest and not ignoble needs and desires that image appeals? The helmet that pressed upon the brow even whilst it protected the brain, and wore away the hair even whilst it was a defence, is lifted off, and on unruffled locks the garland is intertwined that speaks victory and befits a festival. One of the old prophets puts the same metaphor in words imperfectly represented by the English translation, when he promises ‘a crown’ or a garland ‘for ashes’—instead of the symbol of mourning, strewed grey and gritty upon the dishevelled hair of the weepers, flowers twined into a wreath—‘the oil of joy for mourning,’ and the festival ‘garment of praise’ to dress the once heavy spirit. So the satisfaction of all desires, the accompaniments of a feast, in abundance, rejoicing and companionship, and conclusive conquest over all foes, are promised us in this great symbol.

But let us look at the passages separately, and we shall find that they present the one thought with differences, and that if we combine these, as in a stereoscope, the picture gains solidity.

The crown is described in three ways. It is the crown of ‘life,’ of ‘glory’ and of ‘righteousness.’ And I venture to think that these three epithets describe the material, so to speak, of which the wreath is composed. The everlasting flower of life, the radiant blossoms of glory, the white flower of righteousness; these are its components.

I need not enlarge upon them, nor will your time allow that I should. Here we have the promise of life, that fuller life which men want, ‘the life of which our veins are scant,’ even in the fullest tide and heyday of earthly existence. The promise sets that future over against the present, as if then first should men know what it means to live: so buoyant, elastic, unwearied shall be their energies, so manifold the new outlets for activity, and the new inlets for the surrounding glory and beauty; so incorruptible and glorious shall be their new being. Here we live a living death; there we shall live indeed; and that will be the crown, not only in regard to physical, but in regard to spiritual, powers and consciousness.

But remember that all this full tide of life is Christ's gift. There is no such thing as natural immortality; there is no such thing as

independent life. All Being, from the lowest creature up to the loftiest created spirit, exists by one law, the continual impartation to it of life from the fountain of life, according to its capacities. And unless Jesus Christ, all through the eternal ages of the future, imparted to the happy souls that sit garlanded at His board the life by which they live, the wreaths would wither on their brows, and the brows would melt away, and dissolve from beneath the wreaths. 'I will give him a crown of life.'

It is a crown of 'glory,' and that means a lustrousness of character imparted by radiation and reflection from the central light of the glory of God. 'Then shall the righteous blaze out like the sun in the Kingdom of My Father.' Our eyes are dim, but we can at least divine the far-off flashing of that great light, and may ponder upon what hidden depths and miracles of transformed perfectness and unimagined lustre wait for us, dark and limited as we are here, in the assurance that we all shall be changed into the 'likeness of the body of His glory.'

It is a crown of 'righteousness.' Though that phrase may mean the wreath that rewards righteousness, it seems more in accordance with the other similar expressions to which I have referred to regard it, too, as the material of which the crown is composed. It is not enough that there should be festal gladness, not enough that there should be calm repose, not enough that there should be flashing glory, not enough

that there should be fulness of life. To accord with the intense moral earnestness of the Christian system there must be, emphatically, in the Christian hope, cessation of all sin and investiture with all purity. The word means the same thing as the ancient promise, ‘Thy people shall be all righteous.’ It means the same thing as the latest promise of the ascended Christ, ‘They shall walk with Me in white.’ And it sets, I was going to say, the very climax and culmination on the other hopes, declaring that absolute, stainless, infallible righteousness which one day shall belong to our weak and sinful spirits.

These, then, are the elements, and on them all is stamped the signature of perpetuity. The victor's wreath is tossed on the ashen heap, the reveller's flowers droop as he sits in the heat of the banqueting-hall; the bride's myrtle blossom fades though she lay it away in a safe place. The crown of life is incorruptible. It is twined of amaranth, ever blossoming into new beauty and never fading.

II. Now look, secondly, at the discipline by which the crown is won.

Observe, first of all, that in more than one of the passages to which we have already referred great emphasis is laid upon Christ as *giving* the crown. That is to say, that blessed future is not won by effort, but is bestowed as a free gift. It is given from the hands which have procured it,

and, as I may say, twined it for us. Unless His brows had been pierced with the crown of thorns, ours would never have worn the garland of victory. Jesus provides the sole means, by His work, by which any man can enter into that inheritance; and Jesus, as the righteous Judge who bestows the rewards, which are likewise the results, of our life here, gives the crown. It remains for ever the gift of His love. 'The wages of sin is death,' but we rise above the region of retribution and desert when we pass to the next clause—'the gift of God is eternal life,' and that 'through Jesus Christ.'

Whilst, then, this must be laid as the basis of all, there must also, with equal earnestness and clearness, be set forth the other thought that Christ's gift has conditions, which conditions these passages plainly set forth. In the one, which I have read as a text, we have these conditions declared as being twofold—protracted discipline and continuous effort. The same metaphor employed by the same Apostle, in his last dying utterance, associates his consciousness that he had fought the good fight and run his race, like the pugilists and runners of the arena, with the hope that he shall receive the crown of righteousness. James declares that it is given to the man who *endures* temptation, not only in the sense of bearing, but of so bearing as not thereby to be injured in Christian character and growth in Christian life. Peter asserts that it is the reward of self-denying discharge of duty. And the Lord from heaven

lays down the condition of faithfulness unto death as the necessary pre-requisite of His gift of the crown of life. In two of the passages there is included, though not precisely on the level of these other requirements, the love of Him and the love of 'His appearing,' as the necessary qualifications for the gift of the crown.

So, to begin with, unless a man has such a love to Jesus Christ as that he is happy in His presence, and longs to have Him near, as parted loving souls do; and, especially, is looking forward to that great judicial coming, and feeling that there is no tremor in his heart at the prospect of meeting the Judge, but an outgoing of desire and love at the hope of seeing his Saviour and his Friend, what right has he to expect the crown? None. And he will never get it. There is a test for us which may well make some of us ask ourselves, Are we Christians, then, at all?

And then, beyond that, there are all these other conditions which I have pointed out, which may be gathered into one—strenuous discharge of daily duty and continual effort after following in Christ's footsteps.

This needs to be as fully and emphatically preached as the other doctrine that eternal life is the gift of God. All manner of mischiefs may come, and have come, from either of these twin thoughts, wrenched apart. But let us weave them as closely together as the stems of the flowers

that make the garlands are twined, and feel that there is a perfect consistency of both in theory, and that there must be a continual union of both, in our belief and in our practice. Eternal life is the gift of God, on condition of our diligence and earnestness. It is not all the same whether you are a lazy Christian or not. It does make an eternal difference in our condition whether here we 'run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.' We have to receive the crown as a gift; we have to wrestle and run, as contending for a prize.

III. And now, lastly, note the power of the reward as motive for life.

Paul says roundly in our text that the desire to obtain the incorruptible crown is a legitimate spring of Christian action. Now, I do not need to waste your time and my own in defending Christian morality from the fantastic objection that it is low and selfish, because it encourages itself to efforts by the prospect of the crown. If there are any men who are Christians—if such a contradiction can be even stated in words—only because of what they hope to gain thereby in another world, they will not get what they hope for; and they would not like it if they did. I do not believe that there are any such; and sure I am, if there are, that it is not Christianity that has made them so. But a thought that we must not take as a supreme motive, we may rightly accept as a subsidiary encouragement. We are not Christians unless the dominant motive of our

lives be the love of the Lord Jesus Christ; and unless we feel a necessity, because of loving Him, to aim to be like Him. But, that being so, who shall hinder me from quickening my flagging energies, and stimulating my torpid faith, and encouraging my cowardice, by the thought that yonder there remain rest, victory, the fulness of life, the flashing of glory, and the purity of perfect righteousness? If such hopes are low and selfish as motives, would God that more of us were obedient to such low and selfish motives!

Now it seems to me, that this spring of action is not as strong in the Christians of this day as it used to be, and as it should be. You do not hear much about heaven in ordinary preaching. I do not think it occupies a very large place in the average Christian man's mind. We have all got such a notion nowadays of the great good that the Gospel does in society and in the present, and some of us have been so frightened by the nonsense that has been talked about the ‘other-worldliness’ of Christianity—as if that was a disgrace to it—that it seems to me that the future of glory and blessedness has very largely faded away, as a motive for Christian men's energies, like the fresco off a neglected convent wall.

And I want to say, dear brethren, that I believe, for my part, that we suffer terribly by the comparative neglect into which this side of Christian truth has fallen. Do you not think that

it would make a difference to you if you really believed, and carried always with you in your thoughts, the thrilling consciousness that every act of the present was registered, and would tell on the far side yonder?

We do not know much of that future, and these days are intolerant of mere unverifiable hypotheses. But accuracy of knowledge and definiteness of impression do not always go together, nor is there the fulness of the one wanted for the clearness and force of the other. Though the thread which we throw across the abyss is very slender, it is strong enough, like the string of a boy's kite, to bear the messengers of hope and desire that we may send up by it, and strong enough to bear the gifts of grace that will surely come down along it.

We cannot understand to-day unless we look at it with eternity for a background. The landscape lacks its explanation, until the mists lift and we see the white summits of the Himalayas lying behind and glorifying the low sandy plain. Would your life not be different; would not the things in it that look great be wholesomely dwindled and yet be magnified; would not sorrow be calmed, and life become ‘a solemn scorn of ills,’ and energies be stimulated, and all be different, if you really ‘did it to obtain an incorruptible crown?’

Brethren, let us try to keep more clearly before us, as solemn and blessed encouragement

in our lives, these great thoughts. The garland hangs on the goal, but ‘a man is not crowned unless he strive according to the laws’ of the arena. The laws are two—No man can enter for the conflict but by faith in Christ; no man can win in the struggle but by faithful effort. So the first law is, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,’ and the second is, ‘Hold fast that thou hast; let no man take thy crown.’

THE LIMITS OF LIBERTY

‘All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 25. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 26. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you eat, asking no question for conscience sake. 28. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof: 29. Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other:

> for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30. For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33. Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.'—1 COR. x. 23-33.

This passage strikingly illustrates Paul's constant habit of solving questions as to conduct by the largest principles. He did not keep his 'theology' and his ethics in separate water-tight compartments, having no communication with each other. The greatest truths were used to regulate the smallest duties. Like the star that guided the Magi, they burned high in the heavens, but yet directed to the house in Bethlehem.

The question here in hand was one that pressed on the Corinthian Christians, and is very far away from our experience. Idolatry had so inextricably intertwined itself with daily life that it was hard to keep up any intercourse with non-Christians without falling into constructive idolatry; and one very constantly obtruding difficulty was that much of the animal food served on private tables had been slaughtered as

sacrifices or with certain sacrificial rites. What was a Christian to do in such a case? To eat or not to eat? Both views had their vehement supporters in the Corinthian church, and the importance of the question is manifest from the large space devoted to it in this letter.

In chapter viii. we have a weighty paragraph, in which one phase of the difficulty is dealt with —the question whether a Christian ought to attend a feast in an idol temple, where, of course, the viands had been offered as sacrifices. But in chapter x. Paul deals with the case in which the meat had been bought in the flesh-market, and so was not necessarily sacrificial. Paul's manner of handling the point is very instructive. He envelops, as it were, the practical solution in a wrapping of large principles; verses 23, 24 precede the specific answer, and are general principles; verses 25-30 contain the practical answer; verses 31-33 and verse 1 of the next chapter are again general principles, wide and imperative enough to mould all conduct, as well as to settle the matter immediately in hand, which, important as it was at Corinth, has become entirely uninteresting to us.

We need not spend time in elucidating the specific directions given as to the particular question in hand further than to note the immense gift of saving common-sense which Paul had, and how sanely and moderately he dealt with his problem. His advice was—‘Don't ask where the joint set before you came from. If

you do not know that it was offered, your eating of it does not commit you to idol worship.' No doubt there were Corinthian Christians with inflamed consciences who did ask such questions, and rather prided themselves on their strictness and rigidity; but Paul would have them let sleeping dogs lie. If, however, the meat is known to have been offered to an idol, then Paul is as rigid and strict as they are. That combination of willingness to go as far as possible, and inflexible determination not to go one step farther, of yieldingness wherever principle does not come in, and of iron fixedness wherever it does, is rare indeed, but should be aimed at by all Christians. The morality of the Gospel would make more way in the world if its advocates always copied the 'sweet reasonableness' of Paul, which, as he tells us in this passage, he learned from Jesus.

As to the wrapping of general principles, they may all be reduced to one—the duty of limiting Christian liberty by consideration for others. In the two verses preceding the practical precepts, that duty is stated with reference entirely to the obligations flowing from our relationship to others. We are all bound together by a mystical chain of solidarity. Since every man is my neighbour, I am bound to think of him and not only of myself in deciding what I may do or refrain from doing. I must abstain from lawful things if, by doing them, I should be likely to harm my neighbour's building up of a strong character. I can, or I believe that I can, pursue

some course of conduct, engage in some enterprise, follow some line of life, without damage to myself, either in regard to worldly position, or in regard to my religious life. Be it so, but I have to take some one else into account. Will my example call out imitation in others, to whom it may be harmful or fatal to do as I can do with real or supposed impunity? If so, I am guilty of something very like murder if I do not abstain.

'What harm is there in betting a shilling? I can well afford to lose it, and I can keep myself from the feverish wish to risk more.' Yes, and you are thereby helping to hold up that gambling habit which is ruining thousands.

'I can take alcohol in moderation, and it does me no harm, and I can go to a prayer-meeting after my dinner and temperate glass, and I am within my Christian liberty in doing so.' Yes, and you take part thereby in the greatest curse that besets our country, and are, by countenancing the drink habit, guilty of the blood of souls. How any Christian man can read these two verses and not abstain from all intoxicants is a mystery. They cut clean through all the pleas for moderate drinking, and bring into play another set of principles which limit liberty by regard to others' good. Surely, if there was ever a subject to which these words apply, it is the use of alcohol, the proved cause of almost all the crime and poverty on both sides of the Atlantic. To the Christians who plead their 'liberty' we can only

say, ‘Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.’

The same general considerations reappear in the verses following the specific precept, but with a difference. The neighbour's profit is still put forth as the limiting consideration, but it is elevated to a higher sacredness of obligation by being set in connection with the ‘glory of God’ and the example of Christ. ‘Do all to the glory of God.’ To put the thought here into modern English—Could you ask a blessing over a glass of spirits when you think that, though it should do you no harm, your taking it may, as it were, tip some weak brother over the precipice? Can you drink to God's glory when you know that drink is slaying thousands body and soul, and that hopeless drunkards are made by wholesale out of moderate drinkers? ‘Give no occasion of stumbling’; do not by your example tempt others into risky courses. And remember that ‘neighbour’ (verse 24) resolves itself into ‘Jews’ and ‘Greeks’ and the ‘Church of God’—that is, substantially to your own race and other races—to men with whom you have affinities, and to men with whom you have none.

A Christian man is bound to shape his life so that no man shall be able to say of him that he was the occasion of that one's fall. He is so bound because every man is his neighbour. He is so bound because he is bound to live to the glory of God, which can never be advanced by laying stumbling-blocks in the way for feeble feet. He is

so bound because, unless Christ had limited Himself within the bound of manhood, and had sought not His own profit or pleasure, we should have had neither life nor hope. For all these reasons, the duty of thinking of others, and of abstaining, for their sakes, from what one might do, is laid on all Christians. How do they discharge that duty who will not forswear alcohol for their neighbour's sake?

‘IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME’

> ‘This do in remembrance of Me.’—1 COR. xi. 24.

The account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, contained in this context, is very much the oldest extant narrative of that event. It dates long before any of the Gospels, and goes up, probably, to somewhere about five and twenty years after the Crucifixion. It presupposes a previous narrative which had been orally delivered to the Corinthians, and, as the Apostle alleges, was derived by him from Christ Himself. It is intended to correct corruptions in the administration of the rite which must have taken some time to develop themselves. And so we are carried back to a period very close indeed to the first institution of the rite, by the words before us.

No reasonable doubt can exist, then, that

within a very few years of our Lord's death, the whole body of Christian people believed that Jesus Christ Himself appointed the Lord's Supper. I do not stay to dwell upon the value of a rite contemporaneous with the fact which it commemorates, and continuously lasting throughout the ages, as a witness of the historical veracity of the alleged fact; but I want to fix upon this thought, that Jesus Christ, who cared very little for rites, who came to establish a religion singularly independent of any outward form, did establish two rites, one of them to be done once in a Christian lifetime, one of them to be repeated with indefinite frequency, and, as it appears, at first repeated daily by the early believers. The reason why these two, and only these two, external ordinances were appointed by Jesus Christ was, that, taken together, they cover the whole ground of revealed fact, and they also cover the whole ground of Christian experience. There is no room for any other rites, because these two, the rite of initiation, which is baptism, and the rite of commemoration, which is the Lord's Supper, say everything about Christianity as a revelation, and about Christianity as a living experience.

Not only so, but in the simple primitive form of the Lord's Supper there is contained a reference to the past, the present and the future. It covers all time as well as all revelation and all Christian experience. For the past, as the text shows us, it is a memorial of one Person, and one fact in that Person's life. For the present, it is

the symbol of the Christian life, as that great sixth chapter in John's gospel sets forth; and for the future, it is a prophecy, as our Lord Himself said on that night in the upper chamber, ‘Till I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom,’ and as the Apostle in this context says, ‘Till He come.’ It is to these three aspects of this ordinance, as the embodiment of all essential Christian truth, and as the embodiment of all deep Christian experience, covering the past, the present, and the future, that I wish to turn now. I do not deal so much with the mere words of my text as with this threefold significance of the rite which it appoints.

I. So then, first, we have to think of it as a memorial of the past.

‘Do this,’ is the true meaning of the words, not ‘in remembrance of Me,’ but something far more sweet and pathetic—‘do this for the *remembering* of Me.’ The former expression is equal to ‘Do this because you remember.’ The real meaning of the words is, ‘Do this in case you forget’; do this in order that you may recall to memory what the slippery memory is so apt to lose—the impression of even the sweetest sweetness, of the most loving love, and the most self-abnegating sacrifice, which He offered for us.

There is something to me infinitely pathetic and beautiful in looking at the words not only as the commandment of the Lord, but as the appeal of the Friend, who wished, as we all do, not to

be utterly forgotten by those whom He cared for and loved; and who, not only because their remembrance was their salvation, but because their forgetfulness pained His human heart, brings to their hearts the plaintive appeal: 'Do not forget Me when I am gone away from you; and even if you have no better way of remembering Me, take these poor symbols, to which I am not too proud to entrust the care of My memory, and do this, lest you forget Me.'

But, dear brethren, there are deeper thoughts than this, on which I must dwell briefly. 'In remembrance of Me'—Jesus Christ, then, takes up an altogether unique and solitary position here, and into the sacredest hours of devotion and the loftiest moments of communion with God, intrudes His personality, and says, 'When you are most religious, remember Me; and let the highest act of your devout life be a thought turned to Myself.'

Now, I want you to ask, is that thought diverted from God? And if it is not, how comes it not to be? I want you honestly to ask yourselves this question—what did *He* think about Himself who, at that moment, when all illusions were vanishing, and life was almost at its last ebb, took the most solemn rite of His nation and laid it solemnly aside and said: 'A greater than Moses is here; a greater deliverance is being wrought': 'Remember Me.' Is that insisting on His own personality, and making the remembrance of it the very apex and shining

summit of all religious aspiration—is that the work of one about whom all that we have to say is, He was the noblest of men? If so, then I want to know how Jesus Christ, in that upper chamber, founding the sole continuous rite of the religion which He established, and making its heart and centre the remembrance of His own personality, can be cleared from the charge of diverting to Himself what belongs to God only, and how you and I, if we obey His commands, escape the crime of idolatry and man-worship? 'Do this in remembrance,'—not of God—'in remembrance of Me,' 'and let memory, with all its tendrils, clasp and cleave to My person.' What an extraordinary demand! It is obscuring God, unless the 'Me' *is* God manifest in the flesh.

Then, still further, let me remind you that in the appointment of this solitary rite as His memorial to all generations, Jesus Christ Himself designates one part of His whole manifestation as the part into which all its pathos, significance, and power are concentrated. We who believe that the death of Christ is the life of the world, are told that one formidable objection to our belief is that Jesus Christ Himself said so little during His life about His death. I believe His reticence upon that question is much exaggerated, but apart altogether from that, I believe also that there was a necessity in the order of the evolution of divine truth, for the reticence, such as it is, because, whatsoever might be possible to Moses and Elias, on the Mount of Transfiguration, 'His decease which He

should accomplish at Jerusalem,' could not be much spoken about in the plain till it had been accomplished. But, apart from both of these considerations, reflect, that whether He said much about His death or not, He said something very much to the purpose about it when He said 'Do this in remembrance of Me.'

It is not His personality only that we are to remember. The whole of the language of the institution of the ritual, as well as the form of the rite, and its connection with the ancient passover, and its connection with the new covenant into connection with which Christ Himself brings it, all point to the significance in His eyes of His death as the Sacrifice for the world's sin. Wherefore 'the body' and 'the blood' separately remembered, except to indicate death by violence? Wherefore the language 'the body *broken* for you'; 'the blood *shed* for many for the remission of sins?' Wherefore the association with the Passover sacrifice? Wherefore the declaration that 'this is the blood of the Covenant,' unless all tended to the one thought —His death is the foundation of all loving relationships possible to us with God; and the condition of the remission of sins—the Sacrifice for the whole world?'

This is the point that He desires us to remember; this is that which He would have live for ever in our grateful hearts.

I say nothing about the absolute exclusion of

any other purpose of this memorial rite. If it was the mysterious thing that the superstition of later ages has made of it, how, in the name of common-sense, does it come that not one syllable, looking in that direction, dropped from His lips when He established it? Surely He, in that upper chamber, knew best what He meant, and what He was doing when He established the rite; and I, for my part, am contented to be told that I believe in a poor, bald Zwinglianism, when I say with my Master, that the purpose of the Lord's Supper is simply the commemoration, and therein the proclamation, of His death. There is no magic, no mystery, no ‘sacrament’ about it. It blesses us when it makes us remember Him. It does the same thing for us which any other means of bringing Him to mind does. It does that through a different vehicle. A sermon does it by words, the Communion does it by symbols. That is the difference to be found between them. And away goes the whole fabric of superstitious Christianity, and all its mischiefs and evils, when once you accept the simple ‘Remember.’ Christ told us what He meant by the rite when He said ‘Do this in remembrance of Me.’

II. And now one word or two more about the other particulars which I have suggested. The past, however sweet and precious, is not enough for any soul to live upon. And so this memorial rite, just because it is memorial, is a symbol for the present.

That is taught us in the great chapter—the sixth of John's Gospel—which was spoken long before the institution of the Lord's Supper, but expresses in words the same ideas which it expresses by material forms. The Christ who died is the Christ who lives, and must be lived upon by the Christian. If our relation to Jesus Christ were only that 'Once in the end of the ages He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself'; and if we had to look back through lengthening vistas of distance and thickening folds of oblivion, simply to a historical past, in which He was once offered, the retrospect would not have the sweetness in it which it now has. But when we come to this thought that the Christ who was for us is also the Christ in us, and that He is not the Christ for us unless He is the Christ in us; and His death will never wash away our sins unless we feed upon Him, here and now, by faith and meditation, then the retrospect becomes blessedness. The Christian life is not merely the remembrance of a historical Christ in the past, but it is the present participation in a living Christ, with us now.

He is near each of us that we may make Him the very food of our spirits. We are to live upon Him. He is to be incorporated within us by our own act. This is no mysticism, it is a piece of simple reality. There is no Christian life without it. The true life of the believer is just the feeding of our souls upon Him,—our minds accepting, meditating upon, digesting the truths which are

incarnated in Jesus; our hearts feeding upon the love which is so tender, warm, stooping, and close; our wills feeding upon and nourished by the utterance of His will in commandments which to know is joy and to keep is liberty; our hopes feeding upon Him who is our Hope, and in whom they find no chaff and husks of peradventures, but the pure wheat of 'Verily! verily I say unto you'; the whole nature thus finding its nourishment in Jesus Christ. You are Christians in the measure in which the very strength of your spirits, and sustenance of all your faculties, are found in loving communion with the living Lord.

Remember, too, that all this communion, intimate, sweet, sacred, is possible only, or at all events is in its highest forms and most blessed reality, possible only, to those who approach Him through the gate of His death. The feeding upon the living Christ which will be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever, must be a feeding upon the whole Christ. We must not only nourish our spirits on the fact that He was incarnated for our salvation, but also on the truth that He was crucified for our acceptance with God. 'He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me,' has for its deepest explanation, 'He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life.'

My friends, what about the hunger of your souls? Where is it satisfied? With the swine's husks, or with the 'Bread of God which came

down from Heaven?'

III. Now, lastly, that rite which is a memorial and a symbol is also a prophecy.

In the original words of the institution our Lord Himself makes reference to the future; 'till I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.' And in the context here, the Apostle provides for the perpetual continuance, and emphasises the prophetic aspect, of the rite, by that word, 'till He come.' His death necessarily implies His coming again. The Cross and the Throne are linked together by an indissoluble bond. Being what it is, the death cannot be the end. Being what He is, if He has once been offered to bear the sins of many, so He must come the second time without sin unto salvation. The rite, just because it is a rite, is the prophecy of a time when the need for it, arising from weak flesh and an intrusive world, shall cease. 'They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; at that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord.' There shall be no temple in that great city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple thereof. So all external worship is a prophecy of the coming of the perfect time, when that which is perfect being come, the external helps and ladders to climb to the loftiest shall be done away.

But more than that, the memorial and symbol is a prophecy. That upper chamber, with its troubled thoughts, its unbidden tears, starting to

the eyes of the half-understanding listeners, who only felt that He was going away and the sweet companionship was dissolved, may seem to be but a blurred and a poor image of the better communion of heaven. But though on that sad night the Master bore a burdened heart, and the servants had but partial apprehension and a more partial love; though He went forth to agonise and to die, and they went forth to deny and to betray, and to leave Him alone, still it was a prophecy of Christ's table in His kingdom. Heaven is to be a feast. That representation promises society to the solitary, rest to the toilers, the oil of joy for mourning, and the full satisfaction of all desires. That heavenly feast surpasses indeed the antitype in the upper chamber, in that there the Master Himself partook not, and yonder we shall sup with Him and He with us, but is prophetic in that, as there He took a towel and girded Himself and washed the disciples' feet, so yonder He will come forth Himself and serve them. The future is unlike the prophetic past in that 'we shall go no more out'; there shall be no sequences of sorrow, and struggle, and distance and ignorance; but like it in that we shall feast on Christ, for through eternity the glorified Jesus will be the Bread of our spirits, and the fact of His past sacrifice the foundation of our hopes.

So, dear brethren, though our external celebration of this rite be dashed, as it always is, with much ignorance and with feeble faith; and though we gather round this table as the first

generation of Israelites did round the passover, of which it is the successor, with staff in hand and loins girded, and have to eat it often with bitter herbs mingled, and though there be at our sides empty places, yet even in our clouded and partial apprehension, and in the imperfections of this outward type, we may see a gracious shadow of what is waiting for us when we shall go no more out, and all empty places shall be filled, and the bitter herbs shall be changed for the asphodel of Heaven and the sweet flowerage round the throne of God, and we shall feast upon the Christ, and in the loftiest experience of the utmost glories of the Heavens, shall remember the bitter Cross and agony as that which has bought it all. 'This do in remembrance of Me.' May it be a symbol of our inmost life, and the prophecy of the Heaven to which we each shall come!

THE UNIVERSAL GIFT

> 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.'—1 COR. xii. 7.

The great fact which to-day[1] commemorates is too often regarded as if it were a transient gift, limited to those on whom it was first bestowed. We sometimes hear it said that the great need of the Christian world is a second Pentecost, a fresh outpouring of the Spirit of God and the like.

Such a way of thinking and speaking misconceives the nature and significance of the first Pentecost, which had a transient element in it, but in essence was permanent. The rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire, and the strange speech in many languages, were all equally transient. The rushing wind swept on, and the house was no more filled with it. The tongues flickered into invisibility and disappeared from the heads. The hubbub of many languages was quickly silent. But that which these things but symbolised is permanent; and we are not to think of Pentecost as if it were a sudden gush from a great reservoir, and the sluice was let down again after it, but as if it were the entrance into a dry bed, of a rushing stream, whose first outgush was attended with noise, but which thereafter flows continuous and unbroken. If churches or individuals are scant of that gift, it is not because it has not been bestowed, but because it has not been accepted.

My text tells us two things: it unconditionally and broadly asserts that every Christian possesses this great gift—the manifestation is given to every man; and then it asserts that the gift of each is meant to be utilised for the good of all. ‘The manifestation is given to every man to profit withal.’

I. Let me, then, say a word or two, to begin with, about the universality of this gift.

Now, that is implied in our Lord's own

language, as commented upon by the Evangelist. For Jesus Christ declared that this was the standing law of His kingdom, to be universally applied to all its members, that ‘He that believeth on Him, out of him shall flow rivers of living water’; and the Evangelist's comment goes on to say, ‘This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.’ *There* is the condition and the qualification. Wherever there is faith, there the Spirit of God is bestowed, and bestowed in the measure in which faith is exercised. So, then, in full accordance with such fundamental principles in reference to the gift of the Spirit of God, comes the language of my text, and of many another text to which I cannot do more than refer. But let me just quote one or two of them, in order that I may make more emphatic what I believe a great many Christian people do not realise as they ought—viz. that the gift of God's Holy Spirit is not a thing to be desired, as if it were not possessed or confined to select individuals, or manifested by exceptional and lofty attainments, but is the universal heritage of the whole Christian Church. ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost?’ ‘We have all been made to drink into one Spirit,’ says Paul again, in the immediate context. ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,’ says he, unconditionally. And in many other places the same principle is laid down, a principle which I believe the Christian Church to-day needs to have recalled to its

consciousness, that it may be quickened to realise it in its experience far more than is the case at present.

Let me remind you, too, that that universality of the gifts of the Divine Spirit is implied in the very conception of what Christ's work, in its deepest and most precious aspects to us, is. For we are not to limit, as a great many so-called earnest evangelical teachers and believers do—we are not to limit His work to that which is effected when a man first becomes a Christian—viz. pardon and acceptance with God. God forbid that I should ever seem to underrate that great initial gift on which everything else must be built. But I am not underrating it when I say, 'Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith,' and the 'proportion of faith' has been violated, and the perspective and completeness of Christian truth, and of Christ's gifts, have been, alas! to a very large extent distorted because Christian people, trained in what we call the evangelical school, have laid far too little emphasis on the fact that the essential gift of Christ to His people is not pardon, nor acceptance, nor justification, but *life*; and that forgiveness, and altered relationship to God, and assurance of acceptance with Him, are all preliminaries. They are, if I may recur to a figure that I have already employed, the preparing of the channel, and the taking away of the obstacles that block its mouth, in order to the inrush of the flood of the river of the water of life.

This life that Christ gives is the result of the gift of the Spirit. So 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.' The life is the gift considered from our side, and the Spirit is the gift considered from the divine side. 'Every man that hath the Son hath life'; because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made him free from the law of sin and death. So you see if that is true—and I for my part am sure that it is—then all that vulgar way of looking at the influences of the Holy Spirit upon men, as if they were confined to certain exceptional people, or certain abnormal and extraordinary and elevated acts, is swept away. It is not the spasmodic, the exceptional, the rare, not the lofty or transcendentally Christlike acts or characters that are alone the manifestation of the Spirit.

Nor is this gift a thing that a man can discover as distinct from his own consciousness. The point where the river of the water of life comes into the channel of our spirits lies away far up, near the sources, and long before the stream comes into sight in our own consciousness, the blended waters have been inseparably mingled, and flow on peacefully together. 'The Spirit beareth witness *with* our spirits'; and you are not to expect that you can hear two voices speaking, but it is one voice and one only.

Now, that universality of this divine gift underlies the very constitution of the Christian Church. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is

liberty,' said Paul. It is because each Christian man has access to the one Source of illumination and of truth and righteousness and holiness, that no Christian man is to become subject to the dominion of a brother. And it is because on the servants and on the handmaidens has been poured out, in these days, God's Spirit and they prophesy, that all domination of classes or individuals, and all stiffening of the free life of God's Church by man-made creeds, are contrary to the very basis of its existence, and an attack on the dignity of each individual member of the Church. 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One' is said to all Christian people—and 'ye need not that any man teach you,' still less that any man, or body of men, or document framed by men, should be set up as normal and authoritative over Christ's free people.

Still further, and only one word—Let me remind you of what I have already said, and what is only too sadly true, that this grand universality of the Spirit's gift to all Christian people does not fill, in the mind of the ordinary Christian man, the place that it ought, and it does not fill it, therefore, in his experience. I say no more upon that point.

II. And now let me say a word, secondly, about the many-sidedness of this universal gift.

One of the reasons why Christian people as a whole do not realise the universality as they ought is, as I have already suggested in a

somewhat different connection, because they limit their notions far too much of what the gift of God's Spirit is to do to men. We must take a wider view of what that Spirit is meant to effect than we ordinarily take, before we understand how real and how visible its universal manifestations are. Take a leaf out of the Old Testament. The man who made the brass-work for the Tabernacle was ‘full of the Spirit of God.’ The poets who sung the Psalms, in more than one place, declare of themselves that they, too, were but the harps upon which the divine finger played. Samson was capable of his rude feats of physical strength, because ‘the Spirit of God was upon him.’ Art, song, counsel, statesmanlike adaptation of means to ends, and discernment of proper courses for a nation, such as were exemplified in Joseph and in Daniel, are, in the Old Testament, ascribed to the Spirit of God, and even the rude physical strength of the simple-natured and sensuous athlete is traced up to the same source.

But again, we see another sphere of the Spirit's working in the manifestations of it in the experience of the primitive Church. These are, as we all know, accompanied with miracles, speaking with tongues and working wonders. The signs of that Spirit in those days were visible and audible. As I said, when the river first came into its bed, it came like the tide in Morecambe Bay, breast-high, with a roar and a rush. But it was quiet after that. In the context we have a whole series of manifestations of this Divine

Spirit, some of them miraculous and some being natural faculties heightened, but all concerned with the Church as a society, and being for the benefit of the community.

But there is another class. If you turn to the Epistle to the Galatians, you will find a wonderful list there of what the Apostle calls ‘the fruit of the Spirit,’ beginning with ‘love, joy, peace.’ These are all moral and religious, bearing upon personal experience and the completeness of the individual character.

Now, let us include all these aspects in our conception of the fruit of the Spirit's working on men—the secular, if we may use that word, as exhibited in the Old Testament; the miraculous, as seen in the first days of the Church; the ecclesiastical, if we may so designate the endowments mentioned in the context, and the purely personal, moral, and religious emotions and acts. The plain fact is that everything in a Christian's life, except his sin, is the manifestation of that Divine Spirit, from whom all good thoughts, counsels, and works do proceed. He is the ‘Spirit of adoption,’ and whenever in my heart there rises warm and blessed the aspiration ‘Abba! Father!’ it is not my voice only, but the voice of that Divine Spirit. He is the Spirit of intercession; and whenever in my soul there move yearning desires after infinite good, child-like longings to be knit more closely to Him, that, too, is the voice of God's Spirit; and our prayers are then

‘sweet, indeed, when He the Spirit gives by which we pray.’ In like manner, all the variety of Christian emotions and experiences is to be traced to the conjoint operation of that Divine Spirit as the source, and my own spirit as influenced by, and the organ of, the Spirit of God. If I may take a very rough illustration, there is a story in the Old Testament about a king, to whom were given a bow and arrow, with the command to shoot. The prophet's hand was laid on the king's weak hand, and the weak hand was strengthened by the touch of the other; and with one common pull they drew back the string and the arrow sped. The king drew the bow, but it was the prophet's hand grasping his wrist that gave him strength to do it. And that is how the Spirit of God will work with us if we will.

III. Finally, consider the purpose of all the diverse manifestations of the one universal gift.

‘To profit withal’—for his own good who possesses it, and for the good of all the rest of his brethren.

Now, that involves two plain things. There have been people in the Christian Church who have said, ‘We have all the Spirit, and therefore we do not need one another.’ There may be isolation, and self-sufficiency, and a host of other evils coming in, if we only grasp the thought, ‘The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man,’ but they are all corrected if we go

on and say, ‘to profit withal.’ For every one of us has something, and no one of us has everything; so, on the one hand, we want each other, and, on the other hand, we are responsible for the use of what we have.

You get the life, not in order that you may plume yourself on its possession, nor in order that you may ostentatiously display it, still less in order that you may shut it up and do nothing with it; but you get the life in order that it may spread through you to others.

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'The least flower with a brimming cup may sta
And share its dew-drop with another near.'
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We each have the life that God's grace may fructify through us to all. Power is duty; endowment is obligation; capacity prescribes work. ‘The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.’

You can regulate the flow. You have the sluice; you can shut it or open it. I have said that the condition, and the only condition, of possessing the fulness of God's Spirit is faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the more you trust the more you have, and the less your faith the less the gift. You can get much or little, according to the greatness or the smallness, the fixity or the transiency, of your desires. If you hold the empty cup with a tremulous hand, the precious liquid will not be poured into it—for some of it will be spilt—in the same fulness as it would be if you held it steadily. It is the old story—the

miraculous flow of the oil stopped when the widow had no more pots and vessels to bring. The reason why some of us have so little of that Divine Spirit is because we have not held out our vessels to be filled. You can diminish the flow by ignoring it, and that is what a host of so-called Christian people do nowadays. You can diminish it by neglecting to use the little that you have for the purpose for which it was given you. Does anybody profit by your spiritual life? Do you profit much by it yourselves? Has it ever been of the least good to anybody else in the world? 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to' you, if you are a Christian man or woman, more or less. And if you shut it up, and do never an atom of good with it, either to yourselves or to anybody else, of course it will slip away; and, sometime or other, to your astonishment, you will find that the vessels are empty, and that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from you. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'

Footnote 1: Whitsunday.

WHAT LASTS

> 'Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 13. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three. ...'—1 COR. xiii. 8, 13.

We discern the run of the Apostle's thought best by thus omitting the intervening verses and connecting these two. The part omitted is but a buttress of what has been stated in the former of our two verses; and when we thus unite them there is disclosed plainly the Apostle's intention of contrasting two sets of things, three in each set. The one set is 'prophecies, tongues, knowledge'; the other, 'faith, hope, charity.' There also comes out distinctly that the point mainly intended by the contrast is the transiency of the one and the permanence of the other. Now, that contrast has been obscured and weakened by two mistakes, about which I must say a word.

With regard to the former statement, 'Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease,' that has been misunderstood as if it amounted to a declaration that the miraculous gifts in the early Church

were intended to be of brief duration. However true that may be, it is not what Paul means here. The cessation to which he refers is their cessation in the light of the perfect Future. With regard to the other statement, the abiding of faith, hope, charity, that, too, has been misapprehended as if it indicated that faith and hope belonged to this state of things only, and that love was the greatest of the three, because it was permanent. The reason for that misconception has mainly lain in the misunderstanding of the force of '*Now*,' which has been taken to mean 'for the present,' as an implied contrast to an unspoken 'then'; just as in the previous verse we have, '*Now* we see through a glass, *then* face to face.' But the 'now' in this text is not, as the grammarians say, temporal, but logical. That is, it does not refer to time, but to the sequence of the Apostle's thought, and is equivalent to 'so then.' 'So then abideth faith, hope, charity.'

The scope of the whole, then, is to contrast the transient with the permanent, in Christian experience. If we firmly grasped the truth involved, our estimates would be rectified and our practice revolutionised.

I. I ask this question—What will drop away?

Paul answers, 'prophecies, tongues, knowledge.' Now these three were all extraordinary gifts belonging to the present phase of the Christian life. But inasmuch as

these gifts were the heightening of natural capacities and faculties, it is perfectly legitimate to enlarge the declaration and to use these three words in their widest signification. So understood, they come to this, that all our present modes of apprehension and of utterance are transient, and will be left behind.

'Knowledge, it shall cease,' and as the Apostle goes on to explain, in the verses which I have passed over for my present purpose, it shall cease because the perfect will absorb into itself the imperfect, as the inrushing tide will obliterate the little pools in the rocks on the seashore. For another reason, the knowledge, the mode of apprehension belonging to the present, will pass—because here it is indirect, and there it will be immediate. 'We shall know face to face,' which is what philosophers mean by intuition. Here our knowledge 'creeps from point to point,' painfully amassing facts, and thence, with many hesitations and errors, groping its way towards principles and laws. Here it is imperfect, with many a gap in the circumference; or like the thin red line on a map which shows the traveller's route across a prairie, or like the spider's thread in the telescope, stretched athwart the blazing disc of the sun—'but then face to face.' Incomplete knowledge shall be done away; and many of its objects will drop, and much of what makes the science of earth will be antiquated and effete. What would the hand-loom weaver's knowledge of how to throw his shuttle be worth in a

weaving-shed with a thousand looms? Just so much will the knowledges of earth be when we get yonder.

Modes of utterance will cease. With new experiences will come new methods of communication. As a man can speak, and a beast can only growl or bark, so a man in heaven, with new experiences, will have new methods of communication. The comparison between that mode of utterance which we now have, and that which we shall then possess, will be like the difference between the old-fashioned semaphore, that used to wave about clumsy wooden arms in order to convey intelligence, and the telegraph.

Think, then, of a man going into that future life, and saying 'I knew more about Sanscrit than anybody that ever lived in Europe'; 'I sang sweet songs'; 'I was a past master in philology, grammars, and lexicons'; 'I was a great orator.' 'Tongues shall cease'; and the modes of utterance that belonged to earth, and all that holds of them, will drop away, and be of no more use.

If these things are true, brethren, with regard even to the highest form of these high and noble things, how much more and more solemnly true are they with regard to the aims and objects which most of us have in view? They will all drop away, and we shall be left, stripped of what, for most of us, has made the whole interest and activity of our lives.

II. What will last?

‘So then, abideth these three, faith, hope, love.’ When Paul takes three nouns and couples them with a verb in the singular, he is not making a slip of the pen, or committing a grammatical blunder which a child could correct. But there is a great truth in that piece of apparent grammatical irregularity; for the faith, the hope, and the love, for which he can only afford a singular verb, are thereby declared to be in their depth and essence one thing, and it, the triple star, abides, and continues to shine. The three primitive colours are unified in the white beam of light. Do not correct the grammar, and spoil the sense, but discern what he means when he says, ‘Now, abid*eth* faith, hope, love.’ For this is what he means, that the two latter come out of the former, and that without it they are nought, and that it without them is dead.

Faith breeds Hope. *There* is the difference between earthly hopes and Christian people's hopes. Our hopes, apart from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, are but the balancing of probabilities, and the scale is often dragged down by the clutch of eager desires. But all is baseless and uncertain, unless our hopes are the outcome of our faith. Which, being translated into other words, is just this, that the one basis on which men can rest—ay! even for the immediate future, and the contingencies of life, as well as for the solemnities and certainties of heaven—any legitimate and substantial hope is

trust in Jesus Christ, His word, His love, His power, and for the heavenly future, in His Resurrection and present glory. A man who believes these things, and only that man, has a rock foundation on which he can build his hope.

Faith, in like manner, is the parent of Love. Paul and John, diverse as they are in the whole cast of their minds, the one being speculative and the other mystical, the one argumentative and the other simply gazing and telling what he sees, are precisely agreed in regard to this matter. For, to the Apostle of Love, the foundation of all human love towards God is, 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us,' and 'We love Him because He first loved us,' and to Paul the first step is the trusting reception of the love of God, 'commended to us' by the fact that 'whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us,' and from that necessarily flows, if the faith be genuine, the love that answers the sacrifice and obeys the Beloved. So faith, hope, love, these three are a trinity in unity, and it abideth. That is the main point of our last text. Let me say a word or two about it.

I have said that the words have often been misunderstood as if the 'now' referred only to the present order of things, in which faith and hope are supposed to find their only appropriate sphere. But that is clearly not the Apostle's meaning here, for many reasons with which I need not trouble you. The abiding of all three is

eternal abiding, and there is a heavenly as well as an earthly form of faith and hope as well as of love. Just look at these points for a moment.

'Faith abides,' says Paul, yonder, as here. Now, there is a common saying, which I suppose ninety out of a hundred people think comes out of the Bible, about faith being lost in sight. There is no such teaching in Scripture. True, in one aspect, faith is the antithesis of sight. True, Paul does say 'We walk by faith, not by sight.' But that antithesis refers only to part of faith's significance. In so far as it is the opposite of sight, of course it will cease to be in operation when 'we shall know even as we are known' and 'see Him as He is.' But the essence of faith is not in the absence of the person trusted, but the emotion of trust which goes out to the person, present or absent. And in its deepest meaning of absolute dependence and happy confidence, faith abides through all the glories and the lustres of the heavens, as it burns amidst the dimnesses and the darknesses of earth. For ever and ever, on through the irrevoluble ages of eternity, dependence on God in Christ will be the life of the glorified, as it was the life of the militant, Church. No millenniums of possession, and no imaginable increases in beauty and perfectness and enrichment with the wealth of God, will bring us one inch nearer to casting off the state of filial dependence which is, and ever will be, the condition of our receiving them all. Faith 'abides.'

Hope 'abides.' For it is no more a Scriptural idea that hope is lost in fruition, than it is that faith is lost in sight. Rather that Future presents itself to us as the continual communication of an inexhaustible God to our progressively capacious and capable spirits. In that continual communication there is continual progress. Wherever there is progress there must be hope. And thus the fair form, which has so often danced before us elusive, and has led us into bogs and miry places and then faded away, will move before us through all the long avenues of an endless progress, and will ever and anon come back to tell us of the unseen glories that lie beyond the next turn, and to woo us further into the depths of heaven and the fulness of God. Hope 'abides.'

Love 'abides.' I need not, I suppose, enlarge upon that thought which nobody denies, that love is the eternal form of the human relation to God. It, too, like the mercy which it clasps, 'endureth for ever.'

But I may remind you of what the Apostle does not explain in our text, that it is greater than its linked sisters, because whilst faith and hope belong only to a creature, and are dependent and expectant of some good to come to themselves, and correspond to something which is in God in Christ, the love which springs from faith and hope not only corresponds to, but resembles, that from which it comes and by which it lives. The fire kindled is cognate with

the fire that kindles; and the love that is in man is like the love that is in God. It is the climax of his nature; it is the fulfilling of all duty; it is the crown and jewelled clasp of all perfection. And so ‘abideth faith, hope, love, and the greatest of these is love.’

III. Lastly, what follows from all this?

First, let us be quite sure that we understand what this abiding love is. I dare say you have heard people say ‘Ah! I do not care much about Paul's theology. Give me the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. That is beautiful; that praise of Love; *that* comes home to men.’ Yes, very beautiful. Are you quite sure that you know what Paul means by ‘love’? I do not use the word charity, because that lovely word, like a glistening meteor that falls upon the earth, has a rust, as it were, upon its surface that dims its brightness very quickly. Charity has come to mean an indulgent estimate of other people's faults; or, still more degradingly, the giving of money out of your pockets to other people's necessities. These are what the people who do not care much about Paul's theology generally suppose that he means here. But these do not exhaust his meaning. Paul's notion of love is the response of the human love to the divine, which divine is received into the heart by simple faith in Jesus Christ. And his notion of love which never faileth, and endureth all things, and hopeth all things, is love to men, which is but one stream of the great river of love to God. If

we rightly understand what he means by love, we shall find that his praise of love is as theological as anything that he ever wrote. We shall never get further than barren admiration of a beautiful piece of writing, unless our love to men has the source and root to which Paul points us.

Again, let us take this great thought of the permanence of faith, hope, and love as being the highest conception that we can form of our future condition. It is very easy to bewilder ourselves with speculations and theories of another life. I do not care much about them. The great gates keep their secret well. Few stray beams of light find their way through their crevices. The less we say the less likely we are to err. It is easy to let ourselves be led away, by turning rhetoric into revelation, and accepting the symbols of the New Testament as if they carried anything more than images of the realities. But far beyond golden pavements, and harps, and crowns, and white robes, lies this one great thought that the elements of the imperfect, Christlike life of earth are the essence of the perfect, Godlike life in heaven. ‘Now abide these three, faith, hope, love.’

Last of all, let us shape our lives in accordance with these certainties. The dropping away of the transient things is no argument for neglecting or despising them; for our handling of them makes our characters, and our characters abide. But it is a very excellent argument for shaping our

lives so as to seek first the first things, and to secure the permanent qualities, and so to use the transient as that it shall all help us towards that which does not pass.

What will a Manchester man that knows nothing except goods and office work, and knows these only in their superficial aspect, and not as related to God, what, in the name of common-sense, will he do with himself when he gets into a world where there is not a single ledger, nor a desk, nor a yard of cloth of any sort? What will some of us do when, in like manner, we are stripped of all the things that we have cared about, and worked for, and have made our aims down here? Suppose that you knew that you were under sailing orders to go somewhere or other, and that at any moment a breathless messenger might appear and say, 'Come along! we are all waiting for you'; and suppose that you never did a single thing towards getting your outfit ready, or preparing yourself in any way for that which might come at any moment, and could not but come before very long. Would you be a wise man? But that is what a great many of us are doing; doing every day, and all day long, and doing that only. 'He shall leave them in the midst of his days,' says a grim text, 'and at his latter end shall be a fool.'

What will drop? Modes of apprehension, modes of utterance, occupations, duties, relationships, loves; and we shall be left standing naked, stripped, as it were, to the very

quick, and only as much left as will keep our souls alive. But if we are clothed with faith, hope, love, we shall not be found naked. Cultivate the high things, the permanent things; then death will not wrench you violently from all that you have been and cared for; but it will usher you into the perfect form of all that you have been and done upon earth. All these things will pass, but faith, hope, love, 'stay not behind nor in the grave are trod,' but will last as long as Christ, their Object, lives, and as long as we in Him live also.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION

> 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; 4. And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.'—1 COR. xv. 3, 4.

Christmas day is probably not the true anniversary of the Nativity, but Easter is certainly that of the Resurrection. The season is appropriate. In the climate of Palestine the first fruits of the harvest were ready at the Passover for presentation in the Temple. It was an agricultural as well as a historical festival; and

the connection between that aspect of the feast and the Resurrection of our Lord is in the Apostle's mind when he says, in a subsequent part of this chapter, that Christ is ‘risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.’

In our colder climate the season is no less appropriate. The ‘life re-orient out of dust’ which shows itself to-day in every bursting leaf-bud and springing flower is Nature's parable of the spring that awaits man after the winter of death. No doubt, apart from the Resurrection of Jesus, the yearly miracle kindles sad thoughts in mourning hearts, and suggests bitter contrasts to those who sorrow, having no hope, but the grave in the garden has turned every blossom into a smiling prophet of the Resurrection.

And so the season, illuminated by the event, teaches us lessons of hope that ‘we shall not all die.’ Let us turn, then, to the thoughts naturally suggested by the day, and the great fact which it brings to each mind, and confirmed thereafter by the miracle that is being wrought round about us.

I. First, then, in my text, I would have you note the facts of Paul's gospel.

‘First of all ... I delivered’ these things. And the ‘first’ not only points to the order of time in the proclamation, but to the order of importance as well. For these initial facts are the fundamental facts, on which all that may follow

thereafter is certainly built. Now the first thing that strikes me here is that, whatever else the system unfolded in the New Testament is, it is to begin with a simple record of historical fact. It becomes a philosophy, it becomes a religious system; it is a revelation of God; it is an unveiling of man; it is a body of ethical precepts. It is morals and philosophy and religion all in one; but it is first of all a story of something that took place in the world.

If that be so, there is a lesson for men whose work it is to preach it. Let them never forget that their business is to insist upon the truth of these great, supernatural, all-important, and fundamental facts, the death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They must evolve all the deep meanings that lie in them; and the deeper they dig for their meanings the better. They must open out the endless treasures of consolation and enforce the omnipotent motives of action which are wrapped up in the facts; but howsoever far they may carry their evolving and their application of them, they will neither be faithful to their Lord nor true stewards of their message unless, clear above all other aspects of their work, and underlying all other forms of their ministry, there be the unfaltering proclamation—'first of all,' midst of all, last of all—'how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,' and 'that He was raised again according to the Scriptures.'

Note, too, how this fundamental and original

character of the gospel which Paul preached, as a record of facts, makes short work of a great deal that calls itself 'liberal Christianity' in these days. We are told that it is quite possible to be a very good Christian man, and reject the supernatural, and turn away with incredulity from the story of the Resurrection. It may be so, but I confess that it puzzles me to understand how, if the fundamental character of Christian teaching be the proclamation of certain facts, a man who does not believe those facts has the right to call himself a Christian.

Note, further, how there is an element of explanation involved in the proclamation of the facts which turns them into a gospel. Mark how 'that *Christ* died,' not *Jesus*. It is a great truth, that the man, our Brother, Jesus, passed through the common lot, but that is not what Paul says here, though he often says it. What he says is that '*Christ* died.' Christ is the name of an office, into which is condensed a whole system of truth, declaring that it is He who is the Apex, the Seal, and ultimate Word of all divine revelation. It was the *Christ* who died; unless it was so, the death of Jesus is no gospel.

'He died for our sins.' Now, if the Apostle had only said 'He died for us,' that might conceivably have meant that, in a multitude of different ways of example, appeal to our pity and compassion and the like, His death was of use to mankind. But when he says 'He died *for our sins*,' I take leave to think that that

expression has no meaning, unless it means that He died as the expiation and sacrifice for men's sins. I ask you, in what intelligible sense could Christ ‘die for our sins’ unless He died as bearing their punishment and as bearing it for us? And then, finally, ‘He died and rose ... according to the Scriptures,’ and so fulfilled the divine purposes revealed from of old.

To the fact that a man was crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem, ‘and rose again the third day,’ which is the narrative, there are added these three things—the dignity of the Person, the purpose of His death, the fulfilment of the divine intention manifested from of old. And these three things, as I said, turn the narrative into a Gospel.

So, brethren, let us remember that, without all three of them, the death of Jesus Christ is nothing to us, any more than the death of thousands of sweet and saintly men in the past has been, who may have seen a little more of the supreme goodness and greatness than their fellows, and tried in vain to make purblind eyes participate in their vision. Do you think that these twelve fishermen would ever have shaken the world if they had gone out with the story of the Cross, unless they had carried along with it the commentary which is included in the words which I have emphasised? And do you suppose that the type of Christianity which slurs over the explanation, and so does not know what to do with the facts, will ever do much in the world,

or will ever touch men? Let us liberalise our Christianity by all means, but do not let us evaporate it; and evaporate it we surely shall if we falter in saying with Paul, ‘I declare, first of all, that which received,’ how that the death and resurrection were the death and resurrection of the Christ, ‘for our sins, according to the Scriptures.’ These are the facts which make Paul's gospel.

II. Now I ask you to look, in the second place, at what establishes the facts.

We have here, in this chapter, a statement very much older than our existing written gospels. This epistle is one of the four letters of Paul which nobody that I know of—with some quite insignificant exceptions in modern times—has ever ventured to dispute. It is admittedly the writing of the Apostle, written before the gospels, and in all probability within five-and-twenty years of the date of the Crucifixion. And what do we find alleged by it as the state of things at its date? That the belief in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the subject of universal Christian teaching, and was accepted by all the Christian communities. Its evidence to that fact is undeniable; because there was in the early Christian Church a very formidable and large body of bitter antagonists of Paul's, who would have been only too glad to have convicted him, if they could, of any misrepresentation of the usual notions, or divergence from the usual type of teaching. So

we may take it as undeniable that the representation of this chapter is historically true; and that within five-and-twenty years of the death of Jesus Christ every Christian community and every Christian teacher believed in and proclaimed the fact of the Resurrection.

But if that be so, we necessarily are carried a great deal nearer the Cross than five-and-twenty years; and, in fact, there is not, between the moment when Paul penned these words and the day of Pentecost, a single chink in the history where you can insert such a tremendous innovation as the full-fledged belief in a resurrection coming in as something new.

I do not need to dwell at all upon this other thought, that, unless the belief that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead originated at the time of His death, there would never have been a Church at all. Why was it that they did not tumble to pieces? Take the nave out of the wheel and what becomes of the spokes? A dead Christ could never have been the basis of a living Church. If He had not risen from the dead, the story of His disciples would have been the same as that which Gamaliel told the Sanhedrim was the story of all former pseudo-Messiahs such as that man Theudas. ‘He was slain, and as many as followed him were dispersed and came to naught.’ Of course! The existence of the Church demands, as a pre-requisite, the initial belief in the Resurrection. I think, then, that the contemporaneousness of the evidence is

sufficiently established.

What about its good faith? I suppose that nobody, nowadays, doubts the veracity of these witnesses. Anybody that knows an honest man when he sees him, anybody that has the least ear for the tone of sincerity and the accent of conviction, must say that they may have been fanatics, they may have been mistaken, but one thing is clear as sunlight, they were not false witnesses for God.

What, then, about their competency? Their simplicity, their ignorance, their slowness to believe, their stupor of surprise when the fact first dawned upon them, which they tell not with any idea of manufacturing evidence in their own favour, but simply as a piece of history, all tend to make us certain that there was no play of a morbid imagination, no hysterical turning of a wish into a fact, on the part of these men. The sort of things which they say that they saw and experienced are such as to make any such supposition altogether absurd. There are long conversations, appearances appealing to more than one sense, appearances followed by withdrawals, sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening, sometimes at a distance, as on the mountain, sometimes close by, as in the chamber, to single souls and to multitudes. Fancy five hundred people all at once smitten with the same mistake, imagining that they saw what they did not see! Miracles may be difficult to believe, they are not half so

difficult to believe as absurdities. And this modern explanation of the faith in the Resurrection I venture respectfully to designate as absurd.

But there is one other point to which I would like to turn for a moment; and that is that little clause in my text that 'He was buried.' Why does Paul introduce that amongst his facts? Possibly in order to affirm the reality of Christ's death; but I think for another reason. If it be true that Jesus Christ was laid in that sepulchre, a stone's throw outside the city gate, do you not see what a difficulty that fact puts in the way of disbelief or denial of His Resurrection? If the grave—and it was not a grave, remember, like ours, but a cave, with a stone at the door of it, that anybody could roll away for entrance—if the grave was there, why, in the name of common-sense, did not the rulers put an end to the pestilent heresy by saying, 'Let us go and see if the body is there'?

Modern deniers of the Resurrection may fairly be asked to front this thought—If Jesus Christ's body was in the sepulchre, how was it possible for belief in the Resurrection to have been originated, or maintained? If His body was not in the grave, what had become of it? If His friends stole it away then they were deceivers of the worst type in preaching a resurrection; and we have already seen that that hypothesis is ridiculous. If His enemies took it away, for which they had no motive, why did they not

produce it and say, ‘There is an answer to your nonsense. There is the dead man. Let us hear no more of this absurdity of His having risen from the dead’?

‘He died ... according to the Scriptures, and He was buried.’ And the angels’ word carries the only explanation of the fact which it proclaims, ‘He is not here—He is risen.’

I take leave to say that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is established by evidence which nobody would ever have thought of doubting unless for the theory that miracles were impossible. The reason for disbelief is not the deficiency of the evidence, but the bias of the judge.

III. And now I have no time to do more than touch the last thought. I have tried to show what establishes the facts. Let me remind you, in a sentence or two, what the facts establish.

I by no means desire to suspend the whole of the evidence for Christianity on the testimony of the eyewitnesses to the Resurrection. There are a great many other ways of establishing the truth of the Gospel besides that, upon which I do not need to dwell now. But, taking this one specific ground which my text suggests, what do the facts thus established prove?

Well, the first point to which I would refer, and on which I should like to enlarge, if I had time, is the bearing of Christ's Resurrection on

the acceptance of the miraculous. We hear a great deal about the impossibility of miracle and the like. It upsets the certainty and fixedness of the order of things, and so forth, and so forth. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead; and that opens a door wide enough to admit all the rest of the Gospel miracles. It is of no use paring down the supernatural in Christianity, in order to meet the prejudices of a quasi-scientific scepticism, unless you are prepared to go the whole length, and give up the Resurrection. There is the turning point. The question is, Do you believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, or do you not? If your objections to the supernatural are valid, then Christ is not risen from the dead; and you must face the consequences of that. If He is risen from the dead, then you must cease all your talk about the impossibility of miracle, and be willing to accept a supernatural revelation as God's way of making Himself known to man.

But, further, let me remind you of the bearing of the Resurrection upon Christ's work and claims. If He be lying in some forgotten grave, and if all that fair thought of His having burst the bands of death is a blunder, then there was nothing in His death that had the least bearing upon men's sin, and it is no more to me than the deaths of thousands in the past. But if He is risen from the dead, then the Resurrection casts back a light upon the Cross, and we understand that His death is the life of the world, and that ‘by His stripes we are healed.’

But, further, remember what He said about Himself when He was in the world—how He claimed to be the Son of God; how He demanded absolute obedience, implicit trust, supreme love, how He identified faith in Himself with faith in God—and consider the Resurrection as bearing on the reception or rejection of these tremendous claims. It seems to me that we are brought sharp up to this alternative—Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and was declared by the Resurrection to be the Son of God with power; or Jesus Christ has *not* risen from the dead—and what then? Then He was either deceiver or deceived, and in either case has no right to my reverence and my love. We may be thankful that men are illogical, and that many who reject the Resurrection retain reverence, genuine and deep, for Jesus Christ. But whether they have any right to do so is another matter. I confess for myself that, if I did not believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, I should find it very hard to accept, as an example of conduct, or as religious teacher, a man who had made such great claims as He did, and had asked from me what He asked. It seems to me that He is either a great deal more, or a great deal less, than a beautiful saintly soul. If He rose from the dead He is much more; if He did not, I am afraid to say how much less He is.

And, finally, the bearing of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ upon our own hopes of the future may be suggested. It teaches us that life has nothing to do with organisation, but persists

apart from the body. It teaches us that a man may pass from death and be unaltered in the substance of his being; and it teaches us that the earthly house of our tabernacle may be fashioned like unto the glorious house in which He dwells now at the right hand of God. There is no other absolute proof of immortality than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If we accept with all our hearts and minds Paul's Gospel in its fundamental facts, we need not fear to die, because He has died, and by dying has been the death of death. We need not doubt that we shall live again, because He was dead and is alive for ever more. This Samson has carried away the gates on His strong shoulders, and death is no more a dungeon but a passage. If we rest ourselves upon Him, then we can take up, for ourselves and for all that are dear to us and have gone before us, the triumphant song, 'O Death, where is thy sting?' 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

REMAINING AND FALLING ASLEEP

> 'After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen

asleep.'—1 COR. xv. 6.

There were, then, some five-and-twenty years after the Resurrection, several hundred disciples who were known amongst the churches as having been eyewitnesses of the risen Saviour. The greater part survived; some, evidently a very few, had died. The proportion of the living to the dead, after five-and-twenty years, is generally the opposite. The greater part have 'fallen asleep'; some, a comparatively few, remain 'unto this present.' Possibly there was some divine intervention which supernaturally prolonged the lives of these witnesses, in order that their testimony might be the more lasting. But, be that as it may, they evidently were men of mark, and some kind of honour and observance surrounded them, as was very natural, and as appears from the fact that Paul here knows so accurately (and can appeal to His fellow-Christians' accurate knowledge) the proportion between the survivors and the departed. We read of one of them in the Acts of the Apostles at a later date than this, one Mnason, an 'original disciple.'

So we get a glimpse into the conditions of life in the early Church, interesting and of value in an evidential point of view. But my purpose at present is to draw your attention to the remarkable language in which the Apostle here speaks of the living and the dead amongst these witnesses. In neither case does he use the simple, common words 'living' or 'dead'; but in

the one clause he speaks of their ‘remaining,’ and in the other of their ‘falling asleep’; both phrases being significant, and, as I take it, both being traced up to the fact of their having seen the risen Lord as the cause why their life could be described as a ‘remaining,’ and their death as a ‘falling asleep.’ In other words, we have here brought before us, by these two striking expressions, the transforming effect upon life and upon death of the faith in a risen Lord, whether grounded on sight or not. And it is simply to these two points that I desire to turn now.

I. First, then, we have to consider what life may become to those who see the risen Christ.

‘The greater part remain until this present.’ Now the word *remain* is no mere synonym for living or surviving. It not only tells us the fact that the survivors were living, but the kind of life that they did live. It is very significant that it is the same expression as our Lord used in the profound prophetic words, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?’ Now we are told in John's Gospel that ‘that saying went abroad amongst the brethren,’ and inasmuch as it was a matter of common notoriety in the early Church, it is by no means a violent supposition that it may be floating in Paul's memory here, and may determine his selection of this remarkable expression ‘they remain,’ or ‘they tarry,’ and they were tarrying till the Master came. So, then, I think if we give due weight to

the significance of the phrase, we get two or three thoughts worth pondering.

One of them is that the sight of a risen Christ will make life calm and tranquil. Fancy one of these 500 brethren, after that vision, going back to his quiet rural home in some little village amongst the hills of Galilee. How small and remote from Him, and unworthy to ruffle or disturb the heart in which the memory of that vision was burning, would seem the things that otherwise would have been important and distracting! The faith which we have in the risen Christ ought to do the same thing for us, and will do it in the measure in which there shines clearly before that inward eye, which is our true means of apprehending Him, the vision which shone before the outward gaze of that company of wondering witnesses. If we build our nests amidst the tossing branches of the world's trees, they will sway with every wind, and perhaps be blown from their hold altogether by such a storm as we all have sometimes to meet. But we may build our nests in the clefts of the rock, like the doves, and be quiet, as they are. Distractions will cease to distract, and troubles will cease to agitate, and across the heaving surface of the great ocean there will come a Form beneath whose feet the waves smooth themselves, and at whose voice the winds are still. They who see Christ need not be troubled. The ship that is empty is tossed upon the ocean, that which is well laden is steady. The heart that has Christ for a passenger need not fear being rocked by

any storm. Calmness will come with the vision of the Lord, and we shall abide or 'remain,' for there will be no need for us to flee from this Refuge to that, nor shall we be driven from our secure abode by any contingencies. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

It is a good thing to cultivate the disposition that says about most of the trifles of this life, 'It does not much matter'; but the only way to prevent wholesome contempt of the world's trivialities from degenerating into supercilious indifference is, to base it upon Christ, discerned as near us and bestowing upon us the calmness of His risen life. Make Him your scale of importance, and nothing will be too small to demand and be worthy of the best efforts of your work, but nothing will be too great to sweep you away from the serenity of your faith.

Again, the vision of the risen Christ will also lead to patient persistence in duty. If we have Him before us, the distasteful duty which He sets us will not be distasteful, and the small tasks, in which great faithfulness may be manifested, will cease to be small. If we have Him before us we have in that risen Christ the great and lasting Example of how patient continuance in well-doing triumphs over the sorrows that it bears, by and in patiently bearing them, and is crowned at last with glory and honour. The risen Christ is the Pattern for the men who will not be turned aside from the path of duty by any obstacles, dangers, or threats. The risen Christ is the signal

Example of glory following upon faithfulness, and of the crown being the result of the Cross. The risen Christ is the manifest Helper of them that put their trust in Him; and one of the plainest lessons and of the most imperative commands which come from the believing gaze upon that Lord who died because He would do the will of the Father, and is throned and crowned in the heavens because He died, is—By patient continuance in well-doing let us commit the keeping of our souls to Him: and abide in the calling wherewith we are called.

And, again, the sight of the risen Christ leads to a life of calm expectancy. 'If I will that He *tarry* till I come' conveys that shade of meaning. The Apostle was to wait for the Lord from Heaven, and that vision which was given to these 500 men sent them home to their abodes to make all the rest of their lives one calm aspiration for, and patient expectation of, the return of the Lord. These primitive Christians expected that Jesus Christ would come speedily. That expectation was disappointed in so far as the date was concerned, but after nineteen centuries it still remains true that all vigorous and vital Christian life must have in it, as a very important element of its vitality, the onward look which ever is anticipating, which often is desiring, and which constantly is confident of, the coming of the Lord from Heaven. The Resurrection has for its consequences, its sequel and corollary, first the Ascension; then the long tract of time during which Jesus Christ is absent,

but still in divine presence rules the world; and, finally, His coming again in that same body in which the disciples saw Him depart from them. And no Christian life is up to the level of its privileges, nor has any Christian faith grasped the whole articles of its creed, except that which sets in the very centre of all its visions of the future that great thought—He shall come again.

Questions of chronology have nothing to do with that. It stands there before us, the certain fact, made certain and inevitable by the past facts of the Cross and the Grave and Olivet. He has come, He will come; He has gone, He will come back. And for us the life that we live in the flesh ought to be a life of waiting for God's Son from Heaven, and of patient, confident expectancy that when He shall be manifested we also shall be manifested with Him in glory.

So much, then, for life—calm, persistent in every duty, and animated by that blessed and far-off, but certain, hope, and all of these founded upon the vision and the faith of a risen Lord. What have fears and cares and distractions and faint-heartedness and gloomy sorrow to do with the eyes that have beheld the Christ, and with the lives that are based on faith in the risen Lord?

II. So, secondly, consider what death becomes to those who have seen Christ risen from the dead.

‘Some are fallen asleep.’ Now that most

natural and obvious metaphor for death is not only a Christian idea, but is found, as would be expected, in many tongues, but yet with a great and significant difference. The Christian reason for calling death a sleep embraces a great deal more than the heathen reason for doing so, and in some respects is precisely the opposite of that, inasmuch as to most others who have used the word, death has been a sleep that knew no waking, whereas the very pith and centre of the Christian reason for employing the symbol are that it makes our waking sure. We have here what the act of dying and the condition of the dead become by virtue of faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They have ‘fallen asleep.’ The act of dying is but a laying one's self down to rest, and a dropping out of consciousness of the surrounding world. It is very remarkable and very beautiful that the new Testament scarcely ever employs the words *dying* and *death* for the act of separating body and spirit, or for the condition either of the spirit parted from the body, or of the body parted from the spirit. It keeps those grim words for the reality, the separation of the soul from God; and it only exceptionally uses them for the shadow and the symbol, the physical fact of the parting of the man from the house which here he has dwelt in. But the reason why Christianity uses these periphrases or metaphors, these euphemisms for death, is the opposite of the reason why the world uses them. The world is so afraid of dying

that it durst not name the grim, ugly thing. The Christian, or at least the Christian faith, is so little afraid of death that it does not think such a trivial matter worth calling by the name, but only names it 'falling asleep.'

Even when the circumstances of that dropping off to slumber are painful and violent, the Bible still employs the term. Is it not striking that the first martyr, kneeling outside the city, bruised by stones and dying a bloody death, should have been said to fall asleep? If ever there was an instance in which the gentle metaphor seemed all inappropriate it was that cruel death, amidst a howling crowd, and with fatal bruises, and bleeding limbs mangled by the heavy rocks that lay upon them. But yet, 'when he had said this he fell asleep.' If that be true of such a death, no physical pains of any kind make the sweet word inappropriate for any.

We have here not only the designation of the act of dying, but that of the condition of the dead. They are fallen asleep, and they continue asleep. How many great thoughts gather round that metaphor on which it is needless for me to try to dilate! They will suggest themselves without many words to you all.

There lies in it the idea of repose. 'They rest from their labours.' Sleep restores strength, and withdraws a man at once from effort on the outer world, and from communication from it. We may carry the analogy into that unseen

world. We know nothing about the relations to an external universe of the departed who sleep in Jesus. It may be that, if they sleep in Him, since He knows all, they, through Him, may know, too, something—so much as He pleases to impart to them—of what is happening here. And it may even be that, if they sleep in Him, and He wields the energies of Omnipotence, they, through Him, may have some service to do, even while they wait for their house which is from heaven. But there is no need for, nor profit in, such speculations. It is enough that the sweet emblem suggests repose, and that in that sleep there are folded around the sleepers the arms of the Christ on whose bosom they rest, as an infant does on its first and happiest home—its mother's breast.

But then, besides that, the emblem suggests the idea of continuous and conscious existence. A man asleep does not cease to be a man; a dead man does not cease to live. It has often been argued from this metaphor that we are to conceive of the space between death and the resurrection as being a period of unconsciousness, but the analogies seem to me to be in the opposite direction. A sleeping man does not cease to know himself to be, and he does not cease to know himself to be himself. That mysterious consciousness of personal identity survives the passage from waking to sleep, as dreams sufficiently show us. And, therefore, they that sleep know themselves to be.

And, finally, the emblem suggests the idea of waking. Sleep is a parenthesis. If the night comes, the morning comes. 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind?' They that sleep will awake, and be satisfied when they 'awake with Thy likeness.' And so these three things—repose, conscious, continuous existence, and the certainty of awaking—all lie in that metaphor.

Now, then, the risen Christ is the only ground of such hope, and faith in Him is the only state of mind which is entitled to cherish it. Nothing proves immortality except that open grave. Every other foundation is too weak to bear the weight of such a superstructure. The current of present opinion shows, I think, that neither metaphysical nor ethical arguments for the future life will stand the force of the disintegrating criticism which is brought to bear upon that hope by the fashionable materialism of this generation. There is one barrier that will resist that force, and only one, and that is the historical facts that Jesus Christ died, and that Jesus Christ has risen again. He rose; therefore death is not the end of individual existence. He rose; therefore life beyond the grave is possible for humanity. He rose; therefore His sacrifice for the world's sin is accepted, and I may be delivered from my guilt and my burden. He rose; therefore He is declared to be the Son of God with power. He rose; therefore we, if we trust Him, may partake in His Resurrection and in some reflection of His glory. The old Greek architects were often careless of the solidity of

the soil on which they built their temples, and so, many of them have fallen in ruins. The Temple of Immortality can be built only upon the rock of that proclamation—Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. And we, dear brethren, should have all our hopes founded upon that one fact.

So then, for us, the calm, peaceful passage from life into what else is the great darkness is possible on condition of our having beheld the risen Lord. These witnesses of whom my text speaks, Paul would suggest to us, laid themselves quietly down to sleep, because before them there still hovered the memory of the vision which they had beheld. Faith in the risen Christ is the anchor of the soul in death, and there is nothing else by which we can hold then.

As the same Apostle, in one of his other letters, puts it, the belief that Christ is risen is not only the irrefragable ground of our hope that we, too, shall rise, but has the power to change the whole aspect of our death. Did you ever observe the emphasis with which He says, 'If we believe that Jesus *died* and rose again, even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with Him?' His death was death indeed, and faith in it softens ours to sleep. He bore the reality that we might never need to know it, and if our poor hearts are resting upon that dear Lord, then the flames are but painted ones and will not burn, and we shall pass through them,

and no smell of fire will be upon us, and all that will be consumed will be the bonds which bind us. He has abolished death. The physical fact remains, but all which to men makes the idea of death is gone if we trust the risen Lord. So that, between two men dying under precisely the same circumstances, of the same disease, in adjacent beds in the same hospital, there may be such a difference as that the same word cannot be applied to the experiences of both.

My dear friends, we have each of us to pass through that last struggle; but we may make it either a quiet going to sleep with a loved Face bending over our closing eyes, like a mother's over her child's cradle, and the same Face meeting us when we open them in the morning of heaven; or we may make it a reluctant departure from all that we care for, and a trembling advance into all from which conscience and heart shrink.

Which is it going to be to you? The answer depends upon that to another question. Are you looking to that Christ that died and is alive for evermore as your life and your salvation? Do you hold fast that Gospel which Paul preached, ‘how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures’? If you do, life will be a calm, persevering, expectant waiting upon Him, and death will be nothing more terrible than falling asleep.

PAUL'S ESTIMATE OF HIMSELF

> ‘By the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.’—1 COR. xv. 10.

The Apostle was, all his life, under the hateful necessity of vindicating his character and Apostleship. Thus here, though his main purpose in the context is simply to declare the Gospel which he preached, he is obliged to turn aside in order to assert, and to back up his assertion, that there was no sort of difference between him and the other recognised teachers of Christian truth. He was forced to do this by persistent endeavours in the Corinthian Church to deny his Apostleship, and the faithfulness of his representation of the Christian verities. The way in which he does it is eminently beautiful and remarkable. He fires up in vindication of himself; and then he checks himself. ‘By the grace of God I am’—and he is going to say what he is, but he bethinks himself, as if he had reflected; ‘No! I will leave other people to say what that is. By the grace of God I am—what I am, whatever that be. And all that I have to say is that God made me, and that I helped Him. For the grace of God which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. You Corinthians may judge what the product is. I tell you how it has come about.’ So there are thoughts here, I think, well worth our pondering and taking into our hearts

and lives.

I. First, as to the one power that makes men.

‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’ Now that word ‘grace’ has got to be worn threadbare, and to mean next door to nothing, in the ears and minds of a great many continual hearers of the Gospel. But Paul had a very definite idea of what he meant by it; and what he meant by it was a very large thing, which we may well ponder for a moment as being the only thing which will transform and ennoble character and will produce fruit that a man need not be ashamed of. The grace of God, in Paul's use of the words, which is the scriptural use of them generally, implies these two things which are connected as root and product—the active love of God, in exercise towards us low and sinful creatures, and the gifts with which that love comes full charged to men. These two things, which at bottom are one, love and its gifts, are all, in the Apostle's judgment, gathered up and stored, as in a great storehouse, in Jesus Christ Himself, and through Him are made accessible to us, and brought to bear upon us for the ennobling of our natures, and the investing of us with graces and beauties of character, all strange to us apart from these.

Now it seems to me that these two things, which come from one root, are the precise things which you and I need in order to make us nobler and purer and more Godlike men than

otherwise we could ever become. For what is it that men need most for noble and pure living? These two things precisely—motive and power to carry out the dictates of conscience.

Every man in the world knows enough of duty and of right to be a far nobler man than any man in the world is. And it is not for want of clear convictions of duty, it is not for want of recognised models and patterns of life, that men go wrong; but it is because there are these two things lacking, motives for nobler service, and power to do and be what they know they ought to be. And precisely here Paul's gospel comes in, ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’ That grace, considered in its two sides of love and of giving, supplies all that we want.

It supplies motives. There is nothing that will bend a man's will like the recognition of divine love which it is blessedness to come in contact with, and to obey. You may try to sway him by motives of advantage and self-interest, and to thunder into his ears the pealing words of duty and right and ‘ought,’ and there is no adequate response. You cannot soften a heart by the hammers of the law. You cannot force a man to do right by brandishing before him the whip that punishes doing wrong. You cannot sway the will by anything but the heart; and when you can touch the deepest spring it moves the whole mass.

You have seen some ponderous piece of

machinery, which resists all attempts of a puny hand laid upon it to make it revolve. But down in one corner is a little hidden spring. Touch that and with majestic slowness and certainty the mighty mass turns. You know those rocking-stones down in the south of England; tons of weight poised upon a pin point, and so exquisitely balanced that a child's finger rightly applied may move the mass. So the whole man is made mobile only by the touch of love; and the grace that comes to us, and says, ‘If ye love Me, keep My commandments’—is, as I believe, the sole motive which will continuously and adequately sway the rebellious, self-centred wills of men, to obedience resulting in nobility of life.

The other aspect of this same great word is, in like manner, that which we need. What men want is, first of all, the will to be noble and good; and, second, the power to carry out the will. It is God that worketh in us both the willing and the doing. I venture to affirm that there is no power known, either to thinkers, or philanthropists, or doctrinaires, or strivers after excellence in the world—no power known and available which will lift a life to such heights of beauty and self-sacrificing nobility, as will the power that comes to us by communication of the grace that is in Jesus Christ.

I am perpetually trying to insist, dear brethren, upon this one thought, that the communication of actual new life is the central gift of the Gospel; and this new life it is, this

nature endowed with new desires, hopes, aims, capacities, which alone will lift the whole man into unwonted heights of beauty and serenity. It is the grace of God, the gift of His Divine Spirit who will dwell with all of us, if we will, which alone can be trusted to make men good.

And now, if that be true, what follows? Surely this, that for all you who have, in any measure, caught a glimpse of what you ought to be, and have been more or less vainly trying to realise your ideal, and reach your goal, there is a better way than the way of self-centred and self-derived and self-dependent effort. There is the way of opening your hearts and spirits to the entrance and access of that great power, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will do in us and for us all that we know we ought to do, and yet feel hampered and hindered in performing.

Oh, dear friends! there are many of you, I believe, who have more or less spasmodically and interruptedly, but with a continual recurrence to the effort, sought to plant your feet firmly in the paths of righteousness, and have more or less failed. Listen to this Gospel, and accept it, and put it to the proof. The love of God which is in Christ Jesus, and the life which that love brings in its hands, for all of us who will trust it, will dwell in you if you will, and mould you into His own likeness, and the law of the spirit of life which was in Christ Jesus will make us free from the law of sin and death.

All noble living is a battle. Can you and I, with our ten thousand, meet him that cometh against us with his twenty, the temptations of the world and of its Prince? Send for the reinforcements, and Jesus Christ will come and teach your hands to war and your fingers to fight. All noble life is self-denial, coercion, restraint; and can my poor, feeble hands apply muscular force enough to the brake to keep the wheels clogged, and prevent them from whirling me downhill into ruin? Let Him come and put His great gentle hand on the top of yours, and that will enable you to scotch the wheels, and make self-denial possible. All noble life is a building up by slow degrees from the foundation. And can you and I complete the task with our own limited resources, and our own feeble strengths? Will not 'all that pass by begin to mock' us and say, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? That is the epitaph written over all moralities and over all lives which, catching some glimpse of the good and the true and the noble, have tried, apart from Christ, to reproduce them in themselves. Frightful gaps, and an unfinished, however fair structure end them all. Go to Him. 'His hand hath laid the foundation of the house, His hand shall also finish it.' He who is Himself the foundation-stone is also the headstone of the corner, which is brought forth with shouting of 'Grace! Grace unto it!'

I need not, I suppose, linger to remind you what important and large lessons these thoughts carry, not only for men who are trying to work

at the task of mending and making their own characters, but on the larger scale, for all who seek to benefit and elevate their fellows. Brethren, it is not for me to depreciate any workers who, in any department, and by any methods, seek, and partially effect, the elevation of humanity. But I should be untrue to my own deepest convictions, and unfaithful to the message which God's providence has given it to me as my life's task to proclaim, if I did not declare that nothing will truly *re-form* humanity, society, the nation, the city, except that which re-creates the individual: 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' entering into their midst.

II. And so, secondly, and very briefly, notice the lesson we get here as to how we should think of our own attainments.

I have already pointed out that there are two beautiful touches in my text. The Apostle traces everything that he is, in his character and in his Christian standing and in his Apostolic work and success, to that grace that has come down upon him, and clothed his nakedness with so glorious a garment. And then, in addition to that, he modestly, and with a fine sense of dignity, refrains from parading his attainments or his achievements, and says, 'It is not for me to estimate what I am; it is for you to do it.' True, indeed, in the next verse he does set forth, in very lofty language, his claims to be in nothing behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, and 'to have laboured more abundantly than they all.'

But still the spirit of that humble and yet dignified silence runs through the whole context. 'By the grace of God I am—what I am.'

Well, then, it is not necessary for a man to be ignorant, or to pretend that he is ignorant, of what he can do. We hear a great deal about the unconsciousness of genius. There is a partial truth in it; and possibly the highest examples of power and success, in any department of mental or intellectual effort, are unaware of their achievements and stature. But if a man can do a certain kind of service there is no harm whatever in his recognising the fact that he can do it. The only harm is in his thinking that because he can, he is a very fine fellow, and that the work itself is a great work; and so setting himself up above his brethren. There is a vast deal of hypocrisy in what is called unconsciousness of power. Most men who have been chosen and empowered to do a great work for God or for men, in any department, have been aware that they could do it. But the less we think about ourselves, in any way, the better. The more entire our recognition of the influx of grace on which we depend for keeping our reservoir full, the less likelihood there will be of touchy self-assertion, the less likelihood of the misuse of the powers that we have. If we are to do much for God, if we are to keep what we have already attained, if we are to make our own lives sweet and beautiful, if we are to be invested with any increase of capacity, or led to any higher heights of nobleness and

Christlikeness, we must copy, and make a conscious effort to copy, these two things, which marked the Apostle's estimate of himself—a distinct recognition that we are only reservoirs and nothing more—'What hast thou that thou hast not received? Why then dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?'—and a humble waiving aside of the attempt to determine what it is that we are. For however clearly a man may know his own powers and achievements, it is hard for him to estimate the relations of these to his whole character.

So, dear brethren, although it is a very homely piece of advice, and may seem to be beneath the so-called dignity of the pulpit, let me venture just to remind you that self-conceit is no disease peculiar to the ten-talented people, but is quite as rife, if not a good deal rifer, among those with one talent. They are very humble when it comes to work, and are quite contented to wrap the one talent up in a napkin then; but when it comes to self-assertion, or what they expect to receive of recognition from others, they need to be reminded quite as much as their betters in endowment—'By the grace of God I am what I am.'

III. And so, lastly, one word about the responsibility for our co-operation with the grace, in order to the accomplishment of its results.

'The grace which was bestowed upon me was

not in vain,' says Paul. 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me, and so I laboured more abundantly than they all.' That is to say, God in His giving love; Christ with His ever out-flowing Spirit, move round our hearts, and desire to enter. But the grace, the love, the gifts of the love may all be put away by our unfaithfulness, by our non-receptivity, by our misuse, and by our negligence. Paul yielded himself to the grace that was brought to work upon him. Have you yielded yourselves?

Paul said, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' He could not have said that, could he, if he had known that the most part of what he was was dead against God's will and purpose? Has God anything to do with making you what you are, or has it been the devil that has had the greater share in it? This man, because he knew that he had submitted himself to the often painful, searching, crucifying, self-restraining and stimulating influences of the Gospel and Spirit of Christ, could say, 'God's grace has made me what I am, and I helped Him to make me.' And can you say anything like that?

Take your life. In how many of its deeds has there been present the consciousness of God and His love? Take your character. How much of it has been shot through and through, so to speak, by the fiery darts of that cleansing, warming, consuming grace of God? Are you daily being baptized in that Spirit, searched by that Spirit, condemned by that grace? Is it the grace of God,

or nature and self and the world and the flesh that have made you what you are?

Oh, brethren I let us cultivate the sense of our need of this divine help, for it does not come where men do not know how weak they are, and how much they want it. The mountain tops are high,—yes! and they are dry; there is no water there. The rivers run in the green valleys deep down. 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' Let us see that we open our hearts to the reception of these quickening and cleansing influences, for it is possible for us to cover ourselves over with such an impenetrable covering that that grace cannot pass through it. Let us see to it that we keep ourselves in close contact with the foundation of all this grace, even Jesus Christ Himself, by desire, by faith, by love, by communion, by meditation, by approximation, by sympathy, by service. And let us see that we use the grace that we possess. 'For to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not'—not possessing in any real sense because not utilising for its appointed purpose —'shall be taken away even that he hath.' Wherefore, brethren, I 'beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.'

THE UNITY OF APOSTOLIC TEACHING

> 'Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.'—1 COR. xv. 11.

Party spirit and faction were the curses of Greek civic life, and they had crept into at least one of the Greek churches—that in the luxurious and powerful city of Corinth. We know that there was a very considerable body of antagonists to Paul, who ranked themselves under the banner of Apollos or of Cephas *i.e.* Peter. Therefore, Paul, keenly conscious that he was speaking to some unfriendly critics, hastens in the context to remove the possible objection which might be made, that the Gospel which he preached was peculiar to himself, and proceeds to assert that the whole substance of what he had to say to men, was held with unbroken unanimity by the other apostles. 'They' means all of *them*; and 'so' means the summary of the Gospel teaching in the preceding verses.

Now, Paul would not have ventured to make that assertion, in the face of men whom he knew to be eager to pick holes in anything that he said, unless he had been perfectly sure of his ground. There were broad differences between him and the others. But their partisans might squabble, as is often the case, and the men, whose partisans they were, be unanimous. There were differences of individual character, of temper, and of views about certain points of Christian truth. But there was an unbroken front of unanimity in regard to all that lies within the

compass of that little word which covers so much ground—'*So* we preach.'

Now, I wish to turn to that outstanding fact—which does not always attract the attention which it deserves—of the absolute identity of the message which all the apostles and primitive teachers delivered, and to seek to enforce some of the considerations and lessons which seem to me naturally to flow from it.

I. First, then, I ask you to think of the fact itself—the unbroken unanimity of the whole body of Apostolic teachers.

As I have said, there were wide differences of characteristics between them, but there was a broad tract of teaching wherein they all agreed. Let me briefly gather up the points of unanimity, the contents of the one Gospel, which every man of them felt was his message to the world. I may take it all from the two clauses in the preceding context, 'how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.' These are the things about which, as Paul declares, there was not the whisper of a dissentient voice. There is the vital centre which he declares every Christian teacher grasped as being the essential of his message, and in various tones and manners, but in substantial identity of content, declared to the world.

Now, what lies in it? The Person spoken of—

the Christ, and all that that word involves of reference to the ancient and incomplete Revelation in the past, its shadows and types, its prophecies and ceremonies, its priesthood and its sacrifices; with all that it involves of reference to the ancient hopes on which a thousand generations had lived, and which either are baseless delusions, or are realised in Jesus—the Person whom all the Apostles proclaimed was One anointed from God as Prophet, Priest, and King; who had come into the world to fulfil all that the ancient system had shadowed by sacrifice, temple, and priest, and was the Monarch of Israel and of the world.

And not only were they absolutely unanimous in regard to the Person, but they were unbrokenly consentient in regard to the facts of His life, His death, and His Resurrection. But the proclamation of the external fact is no gospel. You must add the clause ‘for our sins,’ and then the record, which is a mere piece of history, with no more good news in it than the record of the death of any other martyr, hero, or saint, starts into being truly the good news for the world. The least part of a historical fact is the fact; the greatest part of it is the explanation of the fact, and the setting it in its place in regard to other facts, the exhibition of the principles which it expresses, and of the conclusions to which it leads. So the bare historical declaration of a death and a resurrection is transmuted into a gospel, by that which is the most important part of the Gospel, the explanation of the

meaning of the fact—‘He died for our sins.’

If redemption from sin through the death of a Person is the fundamental conception of the Gospel for the world, then it is clear that, for such a purpose, a divine nature in the Person is wanted. Your notion of what Christ came to do will determine your notion of who He is. If you only recognise that His work is to teach, or to show in exercise a fair human character, then you may rest content with the lower notion of His nature which sees in Him but the foremost of the sons of men. But if we grasp ‘died for our sins,’ then for such a task the incarnation of the Eternal Son of God is the absolute pre-requisite.

Still further, our text brings out the contents of this gospel as being the declaration of the Resurrection. On that I need not here and now dwell at any length. But these are the points, the Person, the two facts, death and resurrection, and the great meaning of the death—viz. the expiation for the world's sins: these are the things on which the whole of the primitive teachers of the Apostolic Church had one voice and one message.

Now, I do not suppose that I need spend any time in showing to you how the extant records bear out, absolutely, this contention of the Apostle's. I need only remind you how the opposition that was waged against him—and it was a very vigorous and a very bitter opposition —from a section of the Church, had no bearing

at all upon the question of what he taught, but only upon the question of to whom it was to be taught. The only objection that the so-called Judaising party in the early Church had against Paul and his preaching, was not the Gospel that he declared, but his assertion that the Gentile nations might enter into the Church through faith in Jesus Christ, without passing through the gate of circumcision. Depend upon it, if there had been any, even the most microscopic, divergence on his part from the general, broad stream of Christian teaching, the sleepless, keen-eyed, unscrupulous enemies that dogged him all his days would have pounced upon it eagerly, and would never have ceased talking about it. But not one of them ever said a word of the sort, but allowed his teaching to pass, because it was the teaching of every one of the apostles.

If I had time, or if it were necessary, it would be easy to point you to the records that we have left of the Apostolic teaching, in order to confirm this unbroken unanimity. I do not need to spend time on that. Proof-texts are not worth so much as the fact that these doctrines are interwoven into the whole structure of the New Testament as a whole—just as they are into Paul's letters. But I may gather one or two sayings, in which the substance of each writer's teaching has been concentrated by himself. For instance, Peter speaks about being ‘redeemed by the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,’ and declares that ‘He Himself bare our sins in His own body

on the tree.' John comes in with his doxology: 'Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins in His own blood'; and it is his pen that records how in the heavens there echoed 'glory and honour and thanks and blessing, for ever and ever, to the Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by His blood.' The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, steeped as he is in ceremonial and sacrificial ideas, and having for his one purpose to work out the thought that Jesus Christ is all that the ancient ritual, sacerdotal and sacrificial system shadows and foretells, sums up his teaching in the statement that Christ having come, a high priest of good things to come, 'through His own blood, entered in, once for all, into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.'

There were limits to the unanimity, as I have already said. Paul and Peter had a great quarrel about circumcision and related subjects. The Apostolic writings are wondrously diverse from one another. Peter is far less constructive and profound than Paul. Paul and Peter are both untouched with the mystic wisdom of the Apostle John. But, in regard to the facts that I have signalised, the divinity, the person of Jesus Christ, His death and Resurrection, and the significance to be attached to that death, they are absolutely one. The instruments in the orchestra are various, the tender flute, the ringing trumpet, and many another, but the note they strike is the same. 'Whether it were I or they, so we preach.'

II. Now, let me ask you to consider the only explanation of this unanimity.

Time was when the people, who did not believe in Christ's divinity and sacrificial death, tortured themselves to try and make out meanings for these epistles, which should not include the obnoxious doctrines. That is nearly antiquated. I suppose that there is nobody now, or next to nobody, who does not admit that, right or wrong, Paul, Peter, John—all of them—teach these two things, that Christ is the Eternal Son of the Father, and that His death is the Sacrifice for the world's sin. But they say that that is not the primitive, simple teaching of the Man of Nazareth; and that the unanimity is a unanimity of misapprehension of, and addition to, His words and to the drift of His teaching.

Now, just think what a huge—I was going to say—inconceivability that supposition is. For there is no point, say from the time at which the Apostle who wrote the words of my text, which was somewhere about the year 56 or 57 A.D.,—there is no point between that period, working backwards through the history of the Church to the Crucifixion, where you can insert such a tremendous revolution of teaching as this. There is no trace of such a change. Peter's earliest speeches, as recorded in Acts, are in some important respects less developed doctrinally than are the epistles, but Christ's Messiahship, death, and Resurrection, with which is connected the remission of sins, are as clearly

and emphatically proclaimed as at any later time. So these points of the Apostolic testimony were preached from the first, and, if in preaching them, the witnesses perverted the simple teaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and ascribed to Him a character which He had not claimed, and to His death a power of which He had not dreamed, they did so at the very time when the impressions of His personality and teaching were most recent and strong. It seems to me, apart altogether from other considerations, that such a right-about-face movement on the part of the early teachers of Christianity, is an absolute impossibility, regard being had to the facts of the case, even if you make much allowance for possible errors in the record.

But I would make another remark. If misapprehension came in, if these men, in their unanimous declaration of Christ's death as the Sacrifice for sin, were not fairly representing the conclusions inevitable from the facts of Christ's life and death, and from His own words, is it not an odd thing that the same misapprehension affected them all? When people misconceive a teacher's doctrine, they generally differ in the nature of their misconceptions, and split into sections and parties. But here you have to account for the fact that every man of them, with all their diversity of idiosyncrasy and character, tumbled into the same pit of error, and that there was not one of them left sane enough to protest. Does that seem to be a likely

thing?

And what about the worth of the teacher's teaching, that did not guard its receivers from such absolute misapprehension as that? If the whole Church unanimously mistook everything that Jesus Christ had said to them, and unwarrantably made out of Him what they did, on this hypothesis, I do not think that there is much left to honour or admire in a teacher, whose teaching was so ambiguous, as that it led all that received it into such an error as that into which, by the supposition, they fell.

No, brethren; they were one, because their Gospel was the only possible statement of the principles that underlay, and the conclusions that flowed from, the plain facts of the life and the teaching of Jesus Christ. I am not going to spend time in quoting His own words. I can only refer to one or two of them very succinctly. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.' 'My flesh is the bread which I will give for the life of the world.' 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' 'This is My body broken for you; take, eat, in remembrance of Me.' 'This is My blood, shed for many for the remission of sins; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.' What possible explanation, doing justice to these words, is there, except 'Jesus Christ died for our

sins according to the Scriptures'? And how could men who had heard them with their own ears, and with their own eyes had seen Him risen from the dead and ascending into heaven, do otherwise than eagerly, enthusiastically, at the cost of all, and with unhesitating voice of unbroken unanimity, 'so preach'?

I quite admit that in Christ's teaching in the gospels you will not find the articulate drawing out into doctrinal statement of the principles that underlay, and the conclusions that flow from, the historical fact of Christ's propitiatory death. I do not wonder at that, nor do I admit that it is any argument against the truth of the divine revelation which is made in these doctrinal statements, to allege that we find nothing corresponding to them in Jesus Christ's own words. The silence is not as absolute as is alleged, as the quotations which I have made, and which might have been multiplied, do distinctly enough show. Even if it were more absolute than it is, the silence is by no means unintelligible. Christ had to offer the Sacrifice before the Sacrifice could be preached. He Himself warned His disciples against accepting His own words prior to the Cross, as the conclusive and ultimate revelation. 'I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot carry them now.' There was need that the Cross should be a fact before it was evolved into a doctrine. And so I venture to say that the unanimity of the preaching is only explicable on the ground of that preaching in both its parts—

its assertion of Jesus' Messiahship and of His propitiatory death—being the repetition on the housetop of the lessons which they had heard in the ear from Him.

III. Note, briefly, the lesson from this unanimity.

Let us distinctly apprehend where is the living heart of the Gospel—that it is the message of redemption by the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God. There follows from that incarnation and sacrifice all the great teaching about the work of the Divine Spirit in men, dwelling in them for evermore. But the beginning of all is, 'Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.' And, brethren, that message meets, as nothing else meets, the deepest needs of every human soul. It is able, as nothing else is able, to open out into a whole encyclopædia and universe of wisdom and truth and power. If we strike it out of our conception of Christianity, or if we obscure it as being the very palpitating centre of the whole, then feebleness will creep over the Christianity that is *minus* a Cross, or does not see in it the Sacrifice for the world's sin. You may cast overboard the sails to lighten the ship. If you do, she lies a log on the waters. And if, for the sake of meeting new phases of thought, Christian churches tamper with this central truth, they have flung away their means of progress and of power.

Let me say again, and in a word only, that the

considerations that I have been trying to submit to you in this sermon, show us the limits within which the modern cry of 'Back to the Christ of the Gospels,' is right, and where it may be wrong. I believe that in former days, and to some extent in the present day, we evangelical teachers have too much sometimes talked rather about the doctrines than about the Person who is the doctrines. And if the cry of 'Back to the Christ' means, 'Do not talk so much about the Atonement and Propitiation; talk about the Christ who atones,' then, with all my heart, I say, 'Amen!' But put the Person in the foreground, the living-loving, the dying-loving, the risen-loving Christ, put Him in the foreground. But if it is implied, as I am afraid it is often implied, that the Christ of the Gospels is one and the Christ of the epistles is another, and that to go back to the Christ of the gospels means to drop 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures,' and to retain only the non-miraculous, moral and religious teachings that are recorded in the three first gospels, then I say that it is fatal for the Church, and it is false to the facts, for the Christ of the epistles is the Christ of the gospels: the difference only being that in the one you have the facts, and in the other you have their meaning and their power.

So, lastly, let this text teach us what we ourselves have to do with this unanimous testimony. 'So we preach, and so ye believed.' Brother! Do you believe *so*? That is to say, is your conception of the Gospel the mighty

redemptive agency which is wrought by the Incarnate Son of God, who was crucified for our offences, and rose that we might live, and is glorified that we, too, may share His glory? Is that your Gospel? But do not be content with an intellectual grasp of the thing. 'So ye believed' means a great deal more than 'I believe that Christ died for our sins.' It means 'I believe in the Christ who did die for my sins.' You must cast yourself as a sinful man on Him; and, so casting, you will find that it is no vain story which is commended to us by all these august voices from the past, but you will have in your own experience the verification of the fact that He died for our sins, in your own consciousness of sins forgiven, and new love bestowed; and so may turn round to Paul, the leader of the chorus, and to all the apostolic band, and say to them, 'Now I believe, not because of thy saying, but because I have seen Him, and myself heard Him.'

THE CERTAINTY AND JOY OF THE RESURRECTION

> 'But now is Christ risen from the dead ... the first fruits of them that slept.'—1 COR. xv. 20.

The Apostle has been contemplating the long train of dismal consequences which he sees

would arise if we only had a dead Christ. He thinks that he, the Apostle, would have nothing to preach, and we, nothing to believe. He thinks that all hope of deliverance from sin would fade away. He thinks that the one fact which gives assurance of immortality having vanished, the dead who had nurtured the assurance have perished. And he thinks that if things were so, then Christian men, who had believed a false gospel, and nourished an empty faith, and died clinging to a baseless hope, were far more to be pitied than men who had had less splendid dreams and less utter illusions.

Then, with a swift revulsion of feeling, he turns away from that dreary picture, and with a change of key, which the dullest ear can appreciate, from the wailing minors of the preceding verses, he breaks into this burst of triumph. 'Now'—things being as they are, for it is the logical 'now,' and not the temporal one—things being as they are, 'Christ is risen from the dead, and that as the first fruits of them that slept.'

Part of the ceremonial of the Passover was the presentation in the Temple of a barley sheaf, the first of the harvest, waved before the Lord in dedication to Him, and in sign of thankful confidence that all the fields would be reaped and their blessing gathered. There may be some allusion to that ceremony, which coincided in time with the Resurrection of our Lord, in the words here, which regard that one solitary

Resurrection as the early ripe and early reaped sheaf, the pledge and the prophecy of the whole ingathering.

Now there seem to me, in these words, to ring out mainly two things—an expression of absolute certainty in the fact, and an expression of unbounded triumph in the certainty of the fact.

And if we look at these two things, I think we shall get the main thoughts that the Apostle would impress upon our minds.

I. The certainty of Christ's Resurrection.

'Now *is* Christ risen,' says he, defying, as it were, doubt and negation, and basing himself upon the firm assurance which he possesses of that historical fact. 'Ah!' you say, 'seeing is believing; and he had evidence such as we can never have.' Well! let us see. Is it possible for us, nineteen centuries nearly after that day, to catch some echo of this assured confidence, and in the face of modern doubts and disbeliefs, to reiterate with as unfaltering assurance as that with which they came from his glowing lips, the great words of my text? Can we, logically and reasonably, as men who are guided by evidence and not by feeling, stand up before the world, and take for ours the ancient confession: 'I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead'? I think we can.

The way to prove a fact is by the evidence of witnesses. You cannot argue that it would be very convenient, if such and such a thing should be true; that great moral effects would follow if we believed it was true, and so on. The way to do is to put people who have seen it into the witness-box, and to make sure that their evidence is worth accepting.

And at the beginning of my remarks I wish to protest, in a sentence, against confusing the issues about this question of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in that fashion which is popular nowadays, when we are told that miracle is impossible, and *therefore* there has been no Resurrection, or that death is the end of human existence, and that *therefore* there has been no Resurrection. That is not the way to go about ascertaining the truth as to asserted facts. Let us hear the evidence. The men who brush aside the testimony of the New Testament writers, in obedience to a theory, either about the impossibility of the supernatural, or about the fatal and final issues of human death, are victims of prejudice, in the strictest meaning of the word; and are no more logical than the well-known and proverbial reasoner who, when told that facts were against him, with sublime confidence in his own infallibility, is reported to have said, ‘So much the worse for the facts.’ Let us deal with evidence, and not with theory, when we are talking about alleged facts of history.

So then, let me remind you that, in this chapter from which my text is taken, we have a record of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, older than, and altogether independent of, the records contained in the gospels, which are all subsequent in date to it; that this Epistle to the Corinthians is one of the four undisputed Epistles of the Apostle, which not the most advanced school of modern criticism has a word to say against; that, therefore, this chapter, written, at the latest, some seven and twenty years after the date of the Crucifixion, carries us up very close to that event; that it shows that the Resurrection was *universally* believed all over the Church, and therefore must have then been long believed; that it enables us to trace the same belief as universal, and in undisputed possession of the field among the churches, at the time of Paul's conversion, which cannot be put down at much more than five or six years after the Crucifixion, and that so we are standing in the presence of absolutely contemporaneous testimony. This is not a case in which a belief slowly and gradually grew up. Whether we accept the evidence or not, we are bound to admit that it is strictly contemporaneous testimony to the fact of Christ's Resurrection.

And the witnesses are reliable and competent, as well as contemporaneous. The old belief that their testimony was imposture is dead long ago; as, indeed, how could it live? It would be an anomaly, far greater than the Resurrection, to believe that these people, Mary, Peter, John,

Paul, and all the rest of them, were conspirators in a lie, and that the fairest system of morality and the noblest consecration that the world has ever seen, grew up out of a fraud, like flowers upon a dunghill. That theory will not hold water; and even those who will not accept the testimony have long since confessed that it will not. But the Apostle, in my context, seems to think that that is the only tenable alternative to the other theory that the witnesses were veracious, and I am disposed to believe that he is right. He says, 'If Christ be not risen, then, are we' the utterly impossible thing of 'false witnesses to God,' devout perjurers, as the phrase might be paraphrased: men who are lying to please God. If Christ be not risen, they have sworn to a thing that they know to be untrue, in order to advance His cause and His kingdom. If that theory be not accepted, there is no other about these men and their message that will hold water for a minute, except the admission of its truth.

The fashionable modern one, that it was hallucination, is preposterous. Hallucinations that five hundred people at once shared! Hallucinations that lasted all through long talks, spread at intervals over more than a month! Hallucinations that included eating and drinking, speech and answer; the clasp of the hand and the feeling of the breath! Hallucinations that brought instruction! Hallucinations that culminated in the fancy that a gathered multitude of them saw Him going up

into heaven! The hallucination is on the other side, I think. They have got the saddle on the wrong horse when they talk about the Apostolic witnesses being the victims of hallucination. It is the people who believe it possible that they should be who are so. The old argument against miracles used to say that it is more consonant with experience that testimony should be false, than that a miracle should be true. I venture to say it is a much greater strain on a man's credulity, to believe that *such* evidence is false than that *such* a miracle, *so* attested, is true. And I, for my part, venture to think that the reasonable men are the men who listen to these eye-witnesses when they say, 'We saw Him rise'; and echo back in answer the triumphant certitude, 'Christ is risen indeed!'

There is another consideration that I might put briefly. A very valuable way of establishing facts is to point to the existence of other facts, which indispensably require the previous ones for their explanation. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. I believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, amongst other reasons, because I do not understand how it was possible for the Church to exist for a week after the Crucifixion, unless Jesus Christ rose again. Why was it that they did not all scatter? Why was it that the spirit of despondency and the tendency to separation, which were beginning to creep over them when they were saying: 'Ah! it is all up! We *trusted* that this had been He,' did not go on to their natural issue? How came it

that these people, with their Master taken away from the midst of them, and the bond of union between them removed, and all their hopes crushed did not say: ‘We have made a mistake, let us go back to Gennesareth and take to our fishing again, and try and forget our bright illusions’? That is what John the Baptist's followers did when he died. Why did not Christ's do the same? Because Christ rose again and re-knit them together. When the Shepherd was smitten, the flock would have been scattered, and never drawn together any more, unless there had been just such a thing as the Resurrection asserts there was, to reunite the dispersed and to encourage the depressed. And so I say, Christianity with a *dead* Christ, and a Church gathered round a grave from which the stone has *not* been rolled away, is more unbelievable than the miracle, for it is an absurdity.

Then there is another thing that I would say in a word. Let me put an illustration to explain what I mean. Suppose, after the execution of King Charles I., in some corner of the country a Pretender had sprung up and said, ‘I am the King!’ the way to end that would have been for the Puritan leaders to have taken people to St. George's Chapel, and said, ‘Look! there is the coffin, there is the body, is that the king, or is it not?’ Jesus Christ was said to have risen again, within a week of the time of His death. The rulers of the nation had the grave, the watch, the stone, the seal. They could have put an end

to the pestilent nonsense in two minutes, if it had been nonsense, by the simple process of saying, ‘Go and look at the tomb, and you will see Him there.’ But this question has never been answered, and never will be—What became of that sacred corpse if Jesus Christ did not rise again from the dead? The clumsy lie that the rulers told, that the disciples had stolen away the body, was only their acknowledgment that the grave was empty. If the grave were empty, either His servants were impostors, which we have seen it is incredible that they were, or the Christ was risen again.

And so, dear brethren, for many other reasons besides this handful that I have ventured to gather and put before you, and in spite of the prejudices of modern theories, I lift up here once more, with unfaltering certitude, the glad message which I beseech you to accept: ‘Christ is risen, the first fruits of them that slept.’

II. So much, then, for the first point in this passage. A word or two about the second—the triumph in the certitude of that Resurrection.

As I remarked at a previous point of this discourse, the Apostle has been speaking about the consequences which would follow from the fact that Christ was not raised. If we take all these consequences and reverse them, we get the glad issues of His Resurrection, and understand why it was that this great burst of triumph comes from the Apostle's lips. And though I must

necessarily treat this part of my subject very inadequately, let me try to gather together the various points on which, as I think, our Easter gladness ought to be built.

First, then, I say, the risen Christ gives us a complete Gospel. A dead Christ annihilates the Gospel. ‘If Christ be not risen,’ says the Apostle, ‘our preaching,’ by which he means not the act but the substance of his preaching, ‘is vain.’ Or, as the word might be more accurately rendered, ‘empty.’ There is nothing in it; no contents. It is a blown bladder; nothing in it but wind.

What was Paul's ‘preaching’? It all turned upon these points—that Jesus Christ was the Son of God; that He was Incarnate in the flesh for us men; that He died on the Cross for our offences; that He was raised again, and had ascended into Heaven, ruling the world and breathing His presence into believing hearts; and that He would come again to be our Judge. These were the elements of what Paul called ‘his Gospel.’ He faces the supposition of a dead Christ, and he says, ‘It is all gone! It is all vanished into thin air. I have nothing to preach if I have not a Cross to preach which is man's deliverance from sin, because on it the Son of God hath died, and I only know that Jesus Christ's sacrifice is accepted and sufficient, because I have it attested to me in His rising again from the dead.’

Dear brethren, on the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is suspended everything which

makes the Gospel a gospel. Strike that out, and what have you left? Some beautiful bits of moral teaching, a lovely life, marred by tremendous mistakes about Himself and His own importance and His relation to men and to God; but you have got nothing left that is worth calling a gospel. You have the cross rising there, gaunt, black, solitary; but, unless on the other side of the river you have the Resurrection, no bridge will ever be thrown across the black gulf, and the Cross remains 'dead, being alone.' You must have a Resurrection to explain the Cross, and then the Life and the Death tower up into the manifestation of God in the flesh and the propitiation for our sins. Without it we have nothing to preach which is worth calling a gospel.

Again, a living Christ gives faith something to lay hold of. The Apostle here in the context twice says, according to the Authorised Version, that a dead Christ makes our faith 'vain.' But he really uses two different words, the former of which is applied to 'preaching,' and means literally 'empty,' while the latter means 'of none effect' or 'powerless.' So there are two ideas suggested here which I can only touch with the lightest hand.

The risen Christ puts some contents, so to speak, into my faith; He gives me something for it to lay hold of.

Who can trust a *dead* Christ, or who can trust

a *human* Christ? That would be as much a blasphemy as trusting any other man. It is only when we recognise Him as declared to be the Son of God, and that by the Resurrection from the dead, that our faith has anything round which it can twine, and to which it can cleave. That living Saviour will stretch out His hand to us if we look to Him, and if I put my poor, trembling little hand up towards Him, He will bend to me and clasp it. You cannot exercise faith unless you have a risen Saviour, and unless you exercise faith in Him your lives are marred and sad.

Again, if Christ be dead, our faith, if it could exist, would be as devoid of effect as it would be empty of substance. For such a faith would be like an infant seeking nourishment at a dead mother's breast, or men trying to kindle their torches at an extinguished lamp. And chiefly would it fail to bring the first blessing which the believing soul receives through and from a risen Christ, namely, deliverance from sin. If He whom we believed to be our sacrifice by His death and our sanctification by His life has not risen, then, as we have seen, all which makes His death other than a martyr's vanishes, and with it vanish forgiveness and purifying. Only when we recognise that in His Cross explained by His Resurrection, we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, and by the communication of the risen life from the risen Lord possess that new nature which sets us free from the dominion of our evil, is

faith operative in setting us free from our sins.

So, dear friends, the risen Christ gives us something for faith to lay hold of, and will make it the hand by which we grasp His strong hand, which lifts us 'out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and sets our feet upon a rock.' But if He lie dead in the grave your faith is vain, because it grasps nothing but a shadow; and it is vain as being purposeless; you are yet in your sins.

The last thought is that the risen Christ gives us the certitude of our Resurrection. I do not for a moment mean to say that, apart from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the thought, be it a wish or a dread, of immortality, has not been found in men, but there is all the difference in the world between forebodings, aspirations, wishes it were so, fears that it might be so, and the calm certitude that it is so. Many men talked about a western continent, but Columbus went there and came back again, and that ended doubt. Many men before, and apart from Jesus, have cherished thoughts of an immortal life beyond the grave, but He has been there and returned. And that, and, as I believe, that only puts the doctrine of immortality upon an irrefragable foundation; and we can say, 'Now, I know that there is that land beyond.' They tell us that death ends everything. Modern materialism, in all its forms, asserts that it is the extinction of the personality. Jesus Christ died, and went through it, and came out of it the

same, and I will trust Him. Brethren, the set of opinion amongst the educated and cultured classes in England, and all over Europe, at this moment, proves to anybody who has eyes to see, that for this generation, rejection of immortality will follow certainly on the rejection of Jesus Christ. And for England to-day, as for Greece when Paul sent his letter to Corinth, the one light of certitude in the great darkness is the fact that Jesus Christ hath died, and is risen again.

If you will let Him, He will make you partakers of His own immortal life. ‘The first fruits of them that slept’ is the pledge and the prophecy of all the waving abundance of golden grain that shall be gathered into the great husbandman's barns. The Apostle goes on to represent the resurrection of ‘them that are Christ's’ as a consequence of their union to Jesus. He has conquered for us all. He has entered the prison-house and come forth bearing its iron gates on His shoulders, and henceforth it is not possible that we should be holden of it. There are two resurrections—one, that of Christ's servants, one that of others. They are not the same in principle—and, alas, they are awfully different in issue. ‘Some shall wake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’

Let me beseech you to make Jesus Christ the life of your dead souls, by humble, penitent trust in Him. And then, in due time, He will be the life of your transformed bodies, changing these

into the likeness of the body of His glory, ‘according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.’

THE DEATH OF DEATH

‘But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. 21. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.... 50. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, (for the trumpet shall sound;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56. The sting of death is sin;

> and the strength of sin is the law.
> 57. But thanks be to God, which
> giveth us the victory, through our
> Lord Jesus Christ. 58. Therefore, my
> beloved brethren, be ye stedfast,
> unmoveable, always abounding in
> the work of the Lord, forasmuch as
> ye know that your labour is not in
> vain in the Lord.'—1 COR. xv. 20,
> 21; 50-58.

This passage begins with the triumphant ringing out of the great fact which changes all the darkness of an earthly life without a heavenly hope into a blaze of light. All the dreariness for humanity, and all the vanity for Christian faith and preaching, vanish, like ghosts at cock-crow, when the Resurrection of Jesus rises sun-like on the world's night. It is a historical fact, established by the evidence proper for such,—namely, the credible testimony of eye-witnesses. They could attest His rising, but the knowledge of the worldwide significance of it comes, not from testimony, but from revelation. Those who saw Him risen join to declare: 'Now is Christ risen from the dead,' but it is a higher Voice that goes on to say, 'and become the first-fruits of them that slept.'

That one Man risen from the grave was like the solitary sheaf of paschal first-fruits, prophesying of many more, a gathered harvest that will fill the great Husbandman's barns. The Resurrection of Jesus is not only a prophecy, showing, as it and it alone does, that death is

not the end of man, but that life persists through death and emerges from it, like a buried river coming again flashing into the light of day, but it is the source or cause of the Christian's resurrection. The oneness of the race necessitated the diffusion through all its members of sin and of its consequence—physical death. If the fountain is poisoned, all the stream will be tainted. If men are to be redeemed from the power of the grave, there must be a new personal centre of life; and union with Him, which can only be effected by faith, is the condition of receiving life from Him, which gradually conquers the death of sin now, and will triumph over bodily death in the final resurrection. It is the resurrection of Christians that Paul is dealing with. Others are to be raised, but on a different principle, and to sadly different issues. Since Christ's Resurrection assures us of the future waking, it changes death into ‘sleep,’ and that sleep does not mean unconsciousness any more than natural sleep does, but only rest from toil, and cessation of intercourse with the external world.

In the part of the passage, verses 50 to 58, the Apostle becomes, not the witness or the reasoner, as in the earlier parts of the chapter, but the revealer of a ‘mystery.’ That word, so tragically misunderstood, has here its uniform scriptural sense of truth, otherwise unknown, made known by revelation. But before he unveils the mystery, Paul states with the utmost force a difficulty which might seem to crush all

hope,—namely, that corporeity, as we know it, is clearly incapable of living in such a world as that future one must be. To use modern terms, organism and environment must be adapted to each other. A fish must have the water, the creatures that flourish at the poles would not survive at the equator. A man with his gross earthly body, so thoroughly adapted to his earthly abode, would be all out of harmony with his surroundings in that higher world, and its rarified air would be too thin and pure for his lungs. Can there be any possibility of making him fit to live in a spiritual world? Apart from revelation, the dreary answer must be 'No.' But the 'mystery' answers with 'Yes.' The change from physical to spiritual is clearly necessary, if there is to be a blessed life hereafter.

That necessary change is assured to all Christians, whether they die or 'remain till the coming of the Lord.' Paul varies in his anticipations as to whether he and his contemporaries will belong to the one class or the other; but he is quite sure that in either case the indwelling Spirit of Jesus will effect on living and dead the needful change. The grand description in verse 52, like the parallel in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, is modelled on the account of the theophany on Sinai. The trumpet was the signal of the Divine Presence. That last manifestation will be sudden, and its startling breaking in on daily commonplace is intensified by the reduplication: 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.' With sudden crash that

awful blare of 'loud, uplifted angel trumpet' will silence all other sounds, and hush the world. The stages of what follows are distinctly marked. First, the rising of the dead changed in passing through death, so as to rise in incorruptible bodies, and then the change of the bodies of the living into like incorruption. The former will not be found naked, but will be clothed with their white garments; the latter will, as it were, put on the glorious robes above the 'muddy vesture of decay,' or, more truly, will see the miracle of these being transfigured till they shine 'so as no fuller on earth could white them.' The living will witness the resurrection of the dead; the risen dead will witness the transformation of the living. Then both hosts will be united, and, through all eternity, 'live together,' and that 'with Him.' Paul evidently expects that he and the Corinthians will be in the latter class, as appears by the 'we' in verse 52. He, as it were, points to his own body when he says, recurring to his former thought of the necessity of harmony between organism and environment, '*this* corruptible must put on incorruption.' Here 'corruption' is used in its physical application, though the ethical meaning may be in the background.

The Apostle closes his long argument and revelation with a burst, almost a shout, of triumph. Glowing words of old prophets rush into his mind, and he breathes a new, grander meaning into them. Isaiah had sung of a time when the veil over all nations should be

destroyed ‘in this mountain,’ and when death should be swallowed up for ever; and Paul grasps the words and says that the prophet's loftiest anticipations will be fulfilled when that monster, whose insatiable maw swallows down youth, beauty, strength, wisdom, will himself be swallowed up. Hosea had prophesied of Israel's restoration under figure of a resurrection, and Paul grasps *his* words and fills them with a larger meaning. He modifies them, in a manner on which we need not enlarge, to express the great Christian thought that death has conquered man but that man in Christ will conquer the conqueror. With swift change of metaphor he represents death as a serpent, armed with a poisoned sting, and that suggests to him the thought, never far away in his view of man, that death's power to slay is derived from—or, so to say, concentrated in—sin; and that at once raises the other equally characteristic and familiar thought that law stimulates sin, since to know a thing to be forbidden creates in perverse humanity an itching to do it, and law reveals sin by setting up the ideal from which sin is the departure. But just as the tracks in Paul's mind were well worn, by which the thought of death brought in that of sin, and that of sin drew after it that of law, so with equal closeness of established association, that of law condemnatory and slaying, brought up that of Christ the all-sufficient refuge from that gloomy triad—Death Sin, Law. Through union with Him each of us may possess His

immortal risen life, in which Death, the engulfer, is himself engulfed; Death, the conqueror, is conquered utterly and for ever; Death, the serpent, has his sting drawn, and is harmless. That participation in Christ's life is begun even here, and God ‘giveth us the victory’ now, even while we live outward lives that must end in death, and will give it perfectly in the resurrection, when ‘they cannot die any more,’ and death itself is dead.

The loftiest Christian hopes have close relation to the lowliest Christian duties, and Paul's triumphant song ends with plain, practical, prose exhortations to steadfastness, unmovable tenacity, and abundant fruitfulness, the motive and power of which will be found in the assurance that, since there is a life beyond, all labour here, however it may fail in the eyes of men, will not be in vain, but will tell on character and therefore on condition through eternity. If our peace does not rest where we would fain see it settle, it will not be wasted, but will return to us again, like the dove to the ark, and we shall ‘self-enfold the large results of’ labour that seemed to have been thrown away.

STRONG AND LOVING

‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith,
quit you like men, be strong. 14. Let
all your things be done with

charity.’—1 COR. xvi. 13, 14.

There is a singular contrast between the first four of these exhortations and the last. The former ring sharp and short like pistol-shots; the last is of gentler mould. The former sound like the word of command shouted from an officer along the ranks; and there is a military metaphor running all through them. The foe threatens to advance; let the guards keep their eyes open. He comes nearer; prepare for the charge, stand firm in your ranks. The battle is joined; ‘quit you like men’—strike a man's stroke—‘be strong.’

And then all the apparatus of warfare is put away out of sight, and the captain's word of command is softened into the Christian teacher's exhortation: ‘Let all your deeds be done in charity.’ For love is better than fighting, and is stronger than swords. And yet, although there is a contrast here, there is also a sequence and connection. No doubt these exhortations, which are Paul's last word to that Corinthian Church on whom he had lavished in turn the treasures of his manifold eloquence, indignation, argumentation, and tenderness, reflected the deficiencies of the people to whom he was speaking. They were schismatic and factious to the very core, and so they needed the exhortation to be left last in their ears, as it were, that everything should be done in love. They were ill-grounded in regard to the very fundamental doctrines of the faith, as all Paul's argumentation about the resurrection proves,

and so they needed to be bidden to 'stand fast in the faith.' Their slothful carelessness as to the discipline of the Christian life, and their consequent feebleness of grasp of the Christian verities, made them loose-braced and weak in all respects, and incapacitated them for vigorous warfare. Thus, we see a picture in these injunctions of the sort of community that Paul had to deal with in Corinth, which yet he called a Church of saints, and for which he loved and laboured. Let me then run over and try to bring out the importance and mutual connection of what I may call this drill-book for the Christian warfare, which is the Christian life.

'Watch ye.' That means one of two things certainly, probably both—Keep awake, and keep your eyes open. Our Lord used the same metaphor, you remember, very frequently, but with a special significance. On His lips it generally referred to the attitude of expectation of His coming in judgment. Paul uses sometimes the figure with the same application, but here, distinctly, it has another. As I said, there is the military idea underlying it. What will become of an army if the sentries go to sleep? And what chance will a Christian man have of doing his *devoir* against his enemy, unless he keeps himself awake, and keeps himself alert? Watchfulness, in the sense of always having eyes open for the possible rush down upon us of temptation and evil, is no small part of the discipline and the duty of the Christian life. One part of that watchfulness consists in exercising a very rigid

and a very constant and comprehensive scrutiny of our motives. For there is no way by which evil creeps upon us so unobserved, as when it slips in at the back door of a specious motive. Many a man contents himself with the avoidance of actual evil actions, and lets any kind of motives come in and out of his mind unexamined. It is all right to look after our *doings*, but 'as a man *thinketh* in his heart, so is he.' The good or the evil of anything that I do is determined wholly by the motive with which I do it. And we are a great deal too apt to palm off deceptions on ourselves to make sure that our motives are right, unless we give them a very careful and minute scrutiny. One side of this watchfulness, then, is a habitual inspection of our motives and reasons for action. 'What am I doing this for?' is a question that would stop dead an enormous proportion of our activity, as if you had turned the steam off from an engine. If you will use a very fine sieve through which to strain your motives, you will go a long way to keeping your actions right. We should establish a rigid examination for applicants for entrance, and make quite sure that each that presents itself is not a wolf in sheep's clothing. Make them all bring out their passports. Let every vessel that comes into your harbour remain isolated from all communication with the shore, until the health officer has been on board and given a clean bill. 'Watch ye,' for yonder, away in the dark, in the shadow of the trees, the black masses of the enemy are gathered, and a

midnight attack is but too likely to bring a bloody awakening to a camp full of sleepers.

My text goes on to bring the enemy nearer and nearer and nearer. ‘Watch ye’—and if, not unnoticed, they come down on you, ‘stand fast in the faith.’ There will be no keeping our ranks, or keeping our feet—or at least, it is not nearly so likely that there will be—unless there has been the preceding watchfulness. If the first command has not been obeyed, there is small chance of the second's being so. If there has not been any watchfulness, it is not at all likely that there will be much steadfastness. Just as with a man going along a crowded pavement, a little touch from a passer-by will throw him off his balance, whereas if he had known it was coming, and had adjusted his poise rightly, he would have stood against thrice as violent a shock, so, in order that we may stand fast, we must watch. A sudden assault will be a great deal less formidable when it is a foreseen assault.

‘Stand fast *in the faith*.’ I take it that this does not mean ‘the thing that we believe,’ which use of the word ‘faith’ is the ecclesiastical, but not the New Testament meaning. In Scripture, faith means not the body of truths that we believe, but the act of believing them. This further command tells us that, in addition to our watchfulness, and as the basis of our steadfastness, confidence in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ will enable us to keep our

feet whatever comes against us, and to hold our ground, whoever may assault us.

But remember that it is not because I have faith that I stand fast, but because of that in which I have faith. My feet may be well shod—and it used to be said that a soldier's shoes were of as much importance in the battle as his musket—my feet may be well shod, but if they are not well planted upon firm ground I never shall be able to stand the collision of the foe. So then, it is not my grasp of the blessed truth, God in Christ my Friend and Helper, but it is that truth which I grasp at, that makes me strong. Or, to put it into other words, it is the foothold, and not the foot that holds it, that ensures our standing firm. Only there is no steadfastness communicated to us from the source of all stability, except by way of our faith, which brings Christ into us. 'Watch ye; stand fast in the faith.'

The next two words of command are very closely connected, though not quite identical. 'Quit you like men.' Play a man's part in the battle; strike with all the force of your muscles. But the Apostle adds, 'be strong.' You cannot play a man's part unless you are. 'Be strong'—the original would rather bear 'become strong.' What is the use of telling men to '*be* strong'? It is a waste of words, in nine cases out of ten, to say to a weak man, 'Pluck up your courage, and show strength.' But the Apostle uses a very uncommon word here, at least uncommon in the

New Testament, and another place where he uses it will throw light upon what he means: 'Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.' Then is it so vain a mockery to tell a poor, weak creature like me to become strong, when you can point me to the source of all strength, in that 'Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind'? We have only to take our weakness there to have it stiffened into strength; as people put bits of wood into what are called 'petrifying wells' which infiltrate into them mineral particles, that do not turn the wood into stone, but make the wood as strong as stone. So my manhood, with all its weakness, may have filtered into it divine strength, which will brace me for all needful duty, and make me 'more than conqueror through Him that loved us.' Then, it is not mockery and cruelty, vanity and surplusage to preach 'Quit you like men; be strong, and be a man'; because if we will observe the plain and not hard conditions, strength will come to us according to our day, in fulfilment of the great promises: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; and My strength is made perfect in weakness.'

And now we have done with the fighting words of command, and come to the gentler exhortation: 'Let all your things be done in charity.'

That was a hard lesson for these Corinthians who were splitting themselves into factions and sects, and tearing each other's eyes out in their

partisanship for various Christian teachers. But the advice has a much wider application than to the suppression of squabbles in Christian communities. It is the sum of all commandments of the Christian life, if you will take love in its widest sense, in the sense, that is, in which it is always used in Paul's writings. We cut it into two halves, and think of it as sometimes meaning love to God, and sometimes love to man. The two are inseparably inter-penetrated in the New Testament writings; and so we have to interpret this supreme commandment in the whole breadth and meaning of that great word *Love*. And then it just comes to this, that love is the victor in all the Christian warfare. If we love God, at any given moment, consciously having our affection engaged with Him, and our heart going out to Him, do you think that any evil or temptation would have power over us? Should we not see them as they are, to be devils in disguise? In the proportion in which I love God I conquer all sin. And at the moment in which that great, sweet, all-satisfying light floods into my soul, I see through the hollowness and the shams, and detect the ugliness and the filth of the things that otherwise would be temptations. If you desire to be conquerors in the Christian fight, remember that the true way of conquest is, as another Apostle says, ‘Keep yourselves in the love of God.’ ‘Let all your things be done in charity.’

And, further, how beautifully the Apostle here puts the great truth that we are all apt to forget,

that the strongest type of human character is the gentlest and most loving, and that the mighty man is not the man of intellectual or material force, such as the world idolises, but the man who is much because he loves much. If we would come to supreme beauty of Christian character, there must be inseparably manifested in our lives, and lived in our hearts, strength and love, might and gentleness. That is the perfect man, and that was the union which was set before us, in the highest form, in the 'Strong Son of God, Immortal Love,' whom we call our Saviour, and whom we are bound to follow. His soldiers conquer as the Captain of their salvation has conquered, when watchfulness and steadfastness and courage and strength are all baptized in love and perfected thereby.

ANATHEMA AND GRACE

> 'The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. 22. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha. 23. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. 24. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.'—1 COR. xvi. 21-24.

Terror and tenderness are strangely mingled in this parting salutation, which was added in the great characters shaped by Paul's own hand,

to the letter written by an amanuensis. He has been obliged, throughout the whole epistle, to assume a tone of remonstrance abundantly mingled with irony and sarcasm and indignation. He has had to rebuke the Corinthians for many faults, party spirit, lax morality, toleration of foul sins, grave abuses in their worship even at the Lord's Supper, gross errors in opinion in the denial of the Resurrection. And in this last solemn warning he traces all these vices to their fountainhead—the defect of love to Jesus Christ—and warns of their fatal issue. ‘Let him be Anathema.’

But he will not leave these terrible words for his last. The thunder is followed by gentle rain, and the sun glistens on the drops; ‘The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.’ Nor for himself will he let the last impression be one of rebuke or even of warning. He desires to show that his heart yearns over them all; so he gathers them all—the partisans; the poor brother that has fallen into sin; the lax ones who, in their misplaced tenderness, had left him in his sin; the misguided reasoners who had struck the Resurrection out of the articles of the Christian creed—he gathers them all into his final salutation, and he says, ‘Take and share my love —though I have had to rebuke—amongst the whole of you.’

Is not that beautiful? And does not the juxtaposition of such messages in this farewell go deeper than the revelation of Paul's

character? May we not see, in these terrible and tender thoughts thus inextricably intertwined and braided together, a revelation of the true nature both of the terror and the tenderness of the Gospel which Paul preached? It is from that point of view that I wish to look at them now.

I. I take first that thought—the terror of the fate of the unloving.

Now, I must ask you for a moment's attention in regard to these two untranslated words. *Anathema Maran-atha*. The first thing to be noticed is that the latter of them stands independently of the former, and forms a sentence by itself, as I shall have to show you presently. ‘Anathema’ means an offering, or a thing devoted; and its use in the New Testament arises from its use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, where it is employed for persons and things that, in a peculiar sense, were set apart and devoted to God. In the story of the conquest of Canaan, for instance, we read of Jericho and other places, persons, or things that were, as our version somewhat unfortunately renders it, ‘accursed,’ or as it ought rather to be rendered, ‘devoted,’ or ‘put under a ban.’ And this ‘devotion’ was of such a sort as that the things or persons devoted were doomed to destruction. All the dreadful things that were done in the Conquest were the consequences of the persons that endured them being thus ‘consecrated,’ in a very dreadful sense, or set apart for God. The underlying idea was that evil

things brought into contact with Him were necessarily destroyed with a swift destruction. That being the meaning of the word, it is clear that its use in my text is distinctly metaphorical, and that it suggests to us that the unloving, like those cities full of uncleanness, when they are brought into contact with the infinite love of the coming Judge, shrivel up and are destroyed.

The other word 'Maran-atha,' as I said, is to be taken as a separate sentence. It belongs to the dialect, which was probably the vernacular of Palestine in the time of Paul, and to which belong, for the most part, the other untranslated words that are scattered up and down the Gospels, such as 'Aceldama,' 'Ephphatha,' and the like. It means 'our Lord comes.' Why Paul chose to use that untranslated scrap of another tongue in a letter to a Gentile Church we cannot tell. Perhaps it had come to be a kind of watchword amongst the early Jewish Christians, which came naturally to his lips. But, at any rate, the use of it here is distinctly to confirm the warning of the previous clause, by pointing to the time at which that warning shall be fulfilled. 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be devoted and destroyed. Our Lord comes.' The only other thing to be noticed by way of introduction is that this first clause is not an imprecation, nor any wish on the part of the Apostle, but is a solemn prophetic warning (acquiesced in by every righteous heart) of that which will certainly come. The significance of the whole may be gathered into one simple

sentence—The coming of the Lord of Love is the destruction of the unloving.

'Our Lord comes.' Paul's Christianity gathered round two facts and moments—one in the past, Christ has come; one in the future, Christ will come. For memory, the coming by the cradle and the Cross; for hope, the coming on His throne in glory; and between these two moments, like the solid piers of a suspension bridge, the frail structure of the Present hangs swinging. In this day men have lost their expectation of the one, and to a large extent their faith in the other. But we shall not understand Scripture unless we seek to make as prominent in our thoughts as on its pages that second coming as the complement and necessary issue of the first. It stands stamped on every line. It colours all the New Testament views of life. It is used as a motive for every duty, and as a magnet to draw men to Jesus Christ by salutary dread. There is no hint in my text about the time of the Lord's coming, no disturbing of the solemnity of the thought by non-essential details of chronology, so we may dismiss these from our minds. The fact is the same, and has the same force as a motive for life, whether it is to be fulfilled in the next moment or thousands of years hence, provided only that you and I are to be there when He comes.

There have been many comings in the past, besides the comings in the flesh. The days of the Lord that have already appeared in the history

of the world are not few. One characteristic is stamped upon them all, and that is the swift annihilation of what is opposed to Him. The Bible has a set of standing metaphors by which to illustrate this thought of the Coming of the Lord—a flood, a harvest when the ears are ripe for the sickle, the waking of God from slumber, and the like; all suggesting similar thoughts. *The* day of the Lord, *the* coming of the Lord, will include and surpass all the characteristics which these lesser and premonitory judgment days presented in miniature. I do not enlarge on this theme. I would not play the orator about it if I could; but I appeal to your consciences, which, in the case of most of us, not only testify of right and wrong, but of responsibility, and suggest a judge to whom we are responsible. And I urge on each, and on myself, this simple question: Have I allowed its due weight on my life and character to that watchword of the ancient church—*Maran-atha*, 'our Lord cometh'?

Now, the coming of the Lord of Love is the annihilation of the unloving. The destruction implied in Anathema does not mean the cessation of Being, but a death which is worse than death, because it is a death in life. Suppose a man with all his past annihilated, with all its effort foiled and crushed, with all its possessions evaporated and disappeared, and with his memory and his conscience stung into clear-sighted activity, so that he looks back upon his former self and into his present self, and feels that it is all waste and chaos, would not that

fulfil the word of my text—'Let him be Anathema'? And suppose that such a man, in addition to these thoughts, and as the root and the source of them, had ever the quivering consciousness that he was and must be in the presence of an unloved Judge; have you not there the naked bones of a very dreadful thing, which does not need any tawdry eloquence of man to make it more solemn and more real? The unloving heart is always ill at ease in the presence of Him whom it does not love. The unloving heart does not love, because it does not trust, nor see the love. Therefore, the unloving heart is a heart that is only capable of apprehending the wrathful side of Christ's character. It is a heart devoid of the fruits of love which are likeness and righteousness, 'without which no man shall see the Lord,' nor stand the flash of the brightness of His coming. So there is no cruelty nor arbitrariness in the decree that the heart that loves not, when brought into contact with the infinite Lord of Love, must find in the touch death and not life, darkness and not light, terror and not hope. Notice that Paul's negation *is* a negation and not an affirmation. He does not say 'he that hateth,' but 'he that doth not love.' The absence of the active emotion of love, which is the child of faith, the parent of righteousness, the condition of joy in His presence, is sufficient to ensure that this fate shall fall upon a man. I durst not enlarge. I leave the truth on your hearts.

II. Secondly, notice the present grace of the

coming Lord. ‘Our Lord cometh. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.’ These two things are not contradictory, but we often deal with them as if they were. And some men lay hold of the one side of the antithesis, and some men lay hold of the other, and rend them apart, and make antagonistic theories of Christianity out of them. But the real doctrine puts the two together and says there is no terror without tenderness, and there is no tenderness without terror. If we sacrifice the aspects of the divine nature, as revealed to us in the gentle Christ, which kindle a wholesome dread, we have, all unwittingly, robbed the aspects of the divine nature, which warm in us a gracious love, of their power to inflame and to illuminate. You cannot have love which is anything nobler than facile good nature and unrighteous indifference, unless you have along with it aspects of God's character and government which ought to make some men afraid. And you cannot keep these latter aspects from being exaggerated and darkened into a Moloch of cruelty, unless you remember that, side by side with them, or rather underlying them and determining them, are aspects of the divine nature to which only child-like confidence and calm beatific returns of love do rightly respond. The terror of the Lord is a garb which our sins force upon the love of the Lord, and when the one is presented it brings with it the other. Never should they be parted in our thoughts or in our teaching.

Note what that present grace is. It is a

tenderness which gathers into its embrace all these imperfect, immoral, lax, heretical people in Corinth, as well as everywhere else—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *you all*.' There were men in that church that said, 'I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas, I of Christ.' There were men in that church that had defiled their souls and their flesh, and corrupted the community, and blasphemed the name of Christ by such foul, sensual sin as was 'not even named among the Gentiles.' There were men in that church so dead to all the sanctities even of the communion-table as that, with the bread between their teeth and the wine-cup in their hands, one was hungry and another drunken. There were men in that church, whose Christianity was so anomalous and singularly fragmentary that they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. And yet Paul flings the great rainbow, as it were, of Christ's enclosing love over them all. And surely the love which gathers in such people leaves none outside its sweep; and the tenderness which stoops from heaven to pity, to pardon, to cleanse such is a tenderness to which the weakest, saddest, sinfullest, foulest of the sons of men may confidently resort. Let nothing rob you of this assurance, that Christ, the coming Lord, is present with us all, and with all our weak and wicked brethren, in the full condescension of His all-embracing, all-hoping, all-forgetting, and all-restoring love. All that we need, in order to get its full sunshine into our hearts, is that we trust

Him utterly, and, so trusting, love Him back again with that love which is the fulfilling of the Law and the crown of the Gospel.

III. And now, lastly, note the tenderness, caught from the Master Himself, of the servant who rebukes.

This last message of love from the Apostle himself, in verse 24, is quite anomalous. There is no other instance in his letters where he introduces himself and his own love at the end, after he has pronounced solemn benediction commending to Christ's grace. But here, as if he had felt that he must leave an impression of himself on their minds, which corresponded to the impression of his Master that he desired to leave, he deviates from his ordinary habit, and makes his last word a personal word—'*My love* be with you all in Christ Jesus.' Rebuke is the sign of love. Sharp condemnation may be the language of love. Plain warning of possible evils is the simple duty of love. So Paul folds all whom he has been rebuking in the warm embrace of his proffered love, which was the very cause of his rebuke. The healing balm of this closing message was to be applied to the wounds which his keen edged words had made, and to show that they were wounds by a surgeon, not by a foe. In effect, this parting smile of love says, 'I am not become your enemy because I tell you the truth; I show my love to you by the plainness and roughness of my words.' Generalise that, free it from its personal

reference, and it just comes to this: There never was a shallower sneer than the sneer which is cast at Christianity, as if it were harsh, 'ferocious,' or unloving, when it preaches the terror of the Lord. No! rather, because the Gospel *is* a Gospel, it must speak plainly about death and destruction to the unloving. The danger signal is not to be blamed for a collision, which it is hoisted to avert; and it is a strange sign of an unfeeling and unsympathetic, or of a harsh and gloomy system, that it should tell men where they are driving, in order that they may never reach the miserable goal. 'Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' And when people say to us preachers, 'Is that your Gospel, a Gospel that talks about everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord at the glory of His coming—is that your Gospel?' We can only answer, 'Yes, it is! Because, so to talk, may by God's mercy, secure that some who hear shall never know anything of the wrath, save the hearing of it with the ear, and may, by the warning of it, be drawn to the Rock of Ages for safety and shelter from the storm.'

Therefore, dear friends, the upshot of all that I have been feebly trying to say is just this; let us lay hold with all our hearts, and by simple faith, of the present grace of the coming, loving Lord and Judge. You can do it. It is your only hope to do it. *Have* you done it? If so, then you may lift up your heads to the throne, and be glad, as those who know that their Friend and Deliverer

will come at last, to help, to bless, to save. If not, dear friend, take the warning, that not to love is to be shrivelled like a leaf in the flame, at that coming which is life to them that love, and destruction to all besides. ‘Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness before Him in the day of judgment.’

II. CORINTHIANS

GOD'S YEA; MAN'S AMEN

> ‘For how many soever be the promises of God, in Him is the yea: wherefore also through Him is the Amen.’—2 COR. i. 20 (R. V.).

This is one of the many passages the force and beauty of which are, for the first time, brought within the reach of an English reader by the alterations in the Revised Version. These are partly dependent upon the reading of the text and partly upon the translation. As the words stand in the Authorised Version, ‘yea’ and ‘amen’ seem to be very nearly synonymous expressions, and to point substantially to the same thing—viz. that Jesus Christ is, as it were, the confirmation and seal of God's promises. But in the Revised Version the alterations, especially in the pronouns, indicate more distinctly that the

Apostle means two different things by the ‘yea’ and the ‘amen’. The one is God's voice, the other is man's. The one has to do with the certainty of the divine revelation, the other has to do with the certitude of our faith in the revelation. When God speaks in Christ, He confirms everything that He has said before, and when we listen to God speaking in Christ, our lips are, through Christ, opened to utter our assenting ‘Amen’ to His great promises. So, then, we have the double form of our Lord's work, covering the whole ground of His relations to man, set forth in these two clauses, in the one of which God's confirmation of His past revelations by Jesus Christ is treated of, and in the other of which the full and confident assent which men may give to that revelation is set before us. I deal, then, with these two points—God's certainties in Christ, and man's certitudes through Christ.

Now these two things do not always go together. We may be very certain, as far as our persuasion is concerned, of a very doubtful fact, or we may be very doubtful, as far as our persuasion is concerned, of a very certain fact. We speak about truths or facts as being certain, and we ought to mean by that, not how we think about them, but what they are in the evidence on which they rest. A certain truth is a truth which has its evidence irrefragable; and the only fitting attitude for men, in the presence of a certain truth, is to have a certitude of the truth. And these two things are, our Apostle tells us, both given to us in and through Jesus Christ. Let

me deal, then, with these two sides.

I. First, God's certainties in Christ.

Of course the original reference of the text is to the whole series of great promises given in the Old Testament. These, says Paul, are sealed and confirmed to men by the revelation and work of Jesus Christ, but it is obvious that the principle which is good in reference to them is good on a wider field. I venture to take that extension, and to ask you to think briefly about some of the things that are made for us indubitably certain in Jesus Christ.

And, first of all, there is the certainty about God's heart. Everywhere else we have only peradventures, hopes, fears, guesses more or less doubtful, and roundabout inferences as to His disposition and attitude towards us. As one of the old divines says somewhere, ‘All other ways of knowing God are like the bended bow, Christ is the straight string.’ The only means by which, indubitably, as a matter of demonstration, men can be sure that God in the heavens has a heart of love towards them is by Jesus Christ. For consider what will make us sure of that. Nothing but facts; words are of little use, arguments are of little use. A revelation, however precious, which simply says to us, ‘God is Love’ is not sufficient for our need. We want to see love in operation if we are to be sure of it, and the only demonstration of the love of God is to witness the love of God in actual working. And you get it

—where? On the Cross of Jesus Christ. I do not believe that anything else irrefragably establishes the fact for the yearning hearts of us poor men who want love, and yet cannot grope our way in amidst the mysteries and the clouds in providence and nature, except this—'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

The question may arise in some minds, Is there any need for proving God's love? The question never arose except within the limits of Christianity. It is only men who have lived all their lives in an atmosphere saturated by Christian sentiment and conviction that ever come to the point of saying, 'We do not want historical revelation to prove to us the fact of a loving God.' They would never have fancied that they did not need the revelation unless, unconsciously to themselves, and indirectly, all their thoughts had been coloured and illuminated by the revelation that they profess they reject. God as Love is 'our dearest faith, our ghastliest doubt,' and the only way to make absolutely certain of the fact that His heart is full of mercy to us is to look upon Him as He stands revealed to us, not merely in the words of Christ, for, precious as they are, these are the smallest part of His revelation, but in the life and in the death which open for us the heart of God. Remember what He said Himself, *not* 'He who hath listened to Me, doth understand the Father,' but 'He that hath *seen* Me hath seen the

Father.' 'In Him is yea,' and the hopes and shadowy fore-revelations of the loving heart of God are confirmed by the fact of His life and death. God *establishes*, not 'commends' as our translation has it, 'His love towards us in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us.'

Further, in Him we have the certainty of pardon. Every deep heart-experience amongst men has felt the necessity of having a clear certainty and knowledge about forgiveness. Men do not feel it always. A man can skate over the surface of the great deeps that lie beneath the most frivolous life, and may suppose, in his superficial way of looking at things, that there is no need for any definite teaching about sin and the mode of dealing with it. But once bring that man face to face, in a quiet hour, with the facts of his life and of a divine law, and all that superficial ignoring of evil in himself and of the dread of punishment and consequences, passes away. I am sure of this, that no religion will ever go far and last long and work mightily, and lay a sovereign hand upon human life, which has not a most plain and decisive message to preach in reference to pardon. And I am sure of this, that one reason for the comparative feebleness of much so-called Christian teaching in this generation is just that the deepest needs of a man's conscience are not met by it. In a religion on which the whole spirit of a man may rest itself, there must be a very plain message about what is to be done with sin. The only message which answers to the needs of an awakened

conscience and an alarmed heart is the old-fashioned message that Jesus Christ the Righteous has died for us sinful men. All other religions have felt after a clear doctrine of forgiveness, and all have failed to find it. Here is the divine 'Yea!' And on it alone we can suspend the whole weight of our soul's salvation. The rope that is to haul us out of the horrible pit and the miry clay had much need to be tested before we commit ourselves to it. There are plenty of easygoing superficial theories about forgiveness predominant in the world to-day. Except the one that says, 'In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sin,' they are all like the rope let down into the dark mine to lift the captives beneath, half of the strands of which have been cut on the sharp edge above, and when the weight hangs on to it, it will snap. There is nothing on which a man who has once learned the tragical meaning and awful reality and depth of the fact of his transgression can suspend his forgiveness, except this, that 'Christ has died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.' 'In Him the promise is yea.'

And, again, we have in Christ divine certainties in regard to life. We have in Him the absolutely perfect pattern to which we are to conform our whole doings. And so, notwithstanding that there may, and will still be many uncertainties and much perplexity, we have the great broad lines of morals and of duty traced with a firm hand, and all that we need to

know of obligation and of perfectness lies in this —Be like Jesus Christ! So the solemn commandments of the ethical side of Divine Revelation, as well as the promises of it, get their ‘yea’ in Jesus Christ, and He stands the Law of our lives.

We have certainties for life, in the matter of protection, guidance, supply of all necessity, and the like, treasured and garnered in Jesus Christ. For He not only confirms, but fulfils, the promises which God has made. If we have that dear Lord for our very own, and He belongs to us as He does belong to them who love Him and trust Him, then in Him we have in actual possession these promises, how many soever they be, which are given by God's other words.

Christ is Protean, and becomes everything to each man that each man requires. He is, as it were, ‘a box where sweets compacted lie.’ ‘In Him are hid all the treasures,’ not only of wisdom and knowledge, but of divine gifts, and we have but to go to Him in order to have that which at each moment as it emerges, we most require. As in some of those sunny islands of the Southern Pacific, one tree supplies the people with all that they need for their simple wants, fruit for their food, leaves for their houses, staves, thread, needles, clothing, drink, everything—so Jesus Christ, this Tree of Life, is Himself the sum of all the promises, and, having Him, we have everything that we need.

And, lastly, in Christ we have the divine certainties as to the Future over which, apart from Him, lie cloud and darkness. As I said about the revelation of the heart of God, so I say about the revelation of a future life—a verbal revelation is not enough. We have enough of arguments; what we want is facts. We have enough of man's peradventures about a future life, enough of evidence more or less valid to show that it is 'probable,' or 'not inconceivable,' or 'more likely than not,' and so on and so on. What we want is that somebody shall cross the gulf and come back again, and so we get in the Resurrection of Christ the one fact on which men may safely rest their convictions of immortality, and I do not think that there is a second anywhere. On it alone, as I believe, hinges the whole answer to the question—'If a man die, shall he live again?' This generation is brought, in my reading of it, right up to this alternative—Christ's Resurrection,—or we die like the brutes that perish. 'All the promises of God in Him are yea.'

II. And now a word as to the second portion of my text—viz. man's certitudes, which answer to God's certainties.

The latter are *in* Christ, the former are *through* Christ. Now it is clear that the only fitting attitude for professing Christians in reference to these certainties of God is the attitude of unhesitating affirmation and joyful assent. Certitude is the fitting response to certainty.

There should be some kind of correspondence between the firmness with which we grasp, the tenacity with which we hold, the assurance with which we believe, these great truths, and the rock-like firmness and immovableness of the evidence upon which they rest. It is a poor compliment to God to come to His most veracious affirmations, sealed with the broad seal of His Son's life and death, and to answer with a hesitating ‘Amen,’ that falters and almost sticks in our throat. Build rock upon rock. Be sure of the certain things. Grasp with a firm hand the firm stay. Immovably cling to the immovable foundation; and though you be but like the limpet on the rock hold fast by the Rock, as the limpet does; for it is an insult to the certainty of the revelation, when there is hesitation in the believer.

I need not dwell for more than a moment upon the lamentable contrast which is presented between this certitude, which is our only fitting attitude, and the hesitating assent and half belief in which so many professing Christians pass their lives. The reasons for that are partly moral, partly intellectual. This is not a day which is favourable to the unhesitating avowal of convictions in reference to an unseen world, and many of us are afraid of being called narrow, or dogmatisers, and think it looks like breadth, and liberality, and culture, and I know not what, to say ‘Well! perhaps it is, but I am not quite sure; I think it is, but I will not commit myself.’ All the promises of God, which in Him are yea, ought

through Him to get from us an ‘Amen.’

There is a great deal that will always be uncertain. The firmer our convictions, the fewer will be the things that they grasp; but, if they be few, they will be large, and enough for us. These truths certified in Christ concerning the heart of God, the message of pardon, the law for life, the gifts of guidance, defence, and sanctifying, the sure and certain hope of immortality—these things we ought to be sure about, whatever borderland of uncertainty may lie beyond them. The Christian verb is ‘we *know*,’ not ‘we hope, we calculate, we infer, we think,’ but ‘we *know*.’ And it becomes us to apprehend for ourselves the full blessedness and power of the certitude which Christ has given to us by the certainties which he has brought us.

I need not speak about the blessedness of such a calm assurance, about the need of it for power, for peace, for effort, for fixedness in the midst of a world and age of change. But I must, before I close, point you to the only path by which that certitude is attainable. ‘*Through* Him is the amen.’ He is the Door. The truths which He confirms are so inextricably intertwined with Himself that you cannot get them and put away Him. Christ's relation to Christ's Gospel is not the relation of other teachers to their words. You may accept the words of a Plato, whatever you think of the Plato who spoke the words. But you cannot separate Christ and His teaching in that fashion, and you must have *Him* if you are to get

it. So, faith in Him, the intellectual acceptance of Him, as the authoritative and infallible Revealer, the bowing down of heart and will to Him as our Commander and our Lord, the absolute trust in Him as the foundation of all our hope and the source of all our blessedness—that is the way to certitude, and there is no other road that we can take.

If thus we keep near Him, our faith will bring us the present experience and fulfilment of the promises, and we shall be sure of them, because we have them already. And whilst men are asking, 'Do we know anything about God? Is there a God at all? Is there such a thing as forgiveness? Can anybody find anywhere absolute rules for his life? Is there anything beyond the grave but mist and darkness?' we can say, 'One thing I know, Jesus Christ is my Saviour, and in Him I know God, and pardon, and duty, and sanctifying, and safety, and immortality; and whatever is dark, this, at least, is sun-clear.' Get high enough up and you will be above the fog; and while the men down in it are squabbling as to whether there is anything outside the mist, you, from your sunny station, will see the far-off coasts, and haply catch some whiff of perfume from their shore, and see some glinting of a glory upon the shining turrets of 'the city that hath foundations.' We have a present possession of all the promises of God; and whoever doubts their certitude, the man who knows himself a son of God by faith, and has experience of forgiveness and guidance and

answered prayer and hopes whose 'sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality,' *knows* the things which others question and doubt.

So live near Jesus Christ, and, holding fast by His hand, you may lift up your joyful 'Amen' to every one of God's 'Yeas.' For in Him we know the Father, in Him we know that we have the forgiveness of sins, in Him we know that God is near to bless and succour and guide, and in Him 'we know that, though our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God.' Wherefore we are always confident; and when the Voice from Heaven says 'Yea!' our choral shout may go up 'Amen! Thou art the faithful and true witness.'

ANOINTED AND STABLISHED

> 'Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.'—2 COR. i. 21.

The connection in which these words occur is a remarkable illustration of the Apostle's habit of looking at the most trivial things in the light of the highest truths. He had been obliged, as the context informs us, to abandon an intended visit to Corinth. The miserable crew of antagonists, who yelped at his heels all his life, seized this change of purpose as the occasion for a double-

barrelled charge. They said he was either fickle and infirm of purpose, or insincere, and saying ‘Yea’ with one side of his mouth and ‘Nay’ with the other. He rebuts this accusation with apparently quite disproportionate vehemence and great solemnity. He points in the context to the faithfulness of God, to the firm Gospel which he had preached, to God's great ‘Yea!’ as his answer. He says in effect, ‘How could I, with such a word burning in my heart, move in a region of equivocation and double-dealing; or how could I, whose whole being is saturated with so firm and stable a Gospel, be unreliable and fickle? The message must make the messenger like itself. Communion with a faithful God must make faith-keeping men; the certainties of God's “Yea,” and the certitudes of our “Amen,” must influence our characters.’ And so to suppose that a man, influenced by Christianity, is a weak, double-dealing, unsteadfast man is a contradiction in terms. In the text he carries his argument a step further, and points, not only to the power of the Gospel to steady and confirm, but also to the fact that God Himself communicates to the believing soul Christian stability by the anointing which He bestows.

So, then, we have in these words the declaration that inflexible, immovable steadfastness is a mark of a Christian, and that this Christian steadfastness, without which there is no Christianity worth the naming, is a direct gift from God Himself by means of that great

anointing which He confers upon men. To that thought, in one or two of its aspects, I ask your attention.

I. Notice the deep source of this Christian steadfastness.

The language of the original, carefully considered, seems to me to bear this interpretation, that the ‘anointing’ of the second clause is the means of the ‘establishing’ of the first—that is to say, that God confers Christian steadfastness of character by the bestowment of the unction of His Divine Spirit.

Now notice how deep Paul digs in order to get a foundation for a common virtue. There are many ways by which men may cultivate the tenacity and steadfastness of purpose which ought to mark us all. Much discipline may be brought to bear in order to secure that; but the text says that the deepest ground upon which it can be rested is nothing less divine and solemn than this, the actual communication to men, to feeble, vacillating, fluctuating wills, and treacherous, wayward, wandering hearts, of the strength and fixedness which are given by God's own Spirit.

I suppose I need not remind you that from beginning to end of Scripture, ‘anointing’ is taken as the symbol of the communication of a true divine influence. The oil poured on the head of prophet, priest, and king was but the expression of the communication to the recipient

of a divine influence which fitted him as well as designated him, for the office that he filled. And although it is aside from my present purpose, I may just, in a sentence, point to the felicity of the emblem. The flowing oil smoothes the surface upon which it is spread, supples the limbs, and is nutritive and illuminating; thus giving an appropriate emblem of the secret, silent, quickening, nourishing, enlightening influences of that Spirit which God gives to all His sons.

And inasmuch as here this oil of the Divine Spirit is stated as being the true ground and basis of Christian steadfastness, it is obvious that the anointing intended cannot be that of mere designation to, and inspiration for, apostolic or other office, but must be the universal possession of all Christian men and women. ‘Ye,’ says another Apostle, speaking to the whole democracy of the Christian Church, and not to any little group of selected aristocrats therein —‘ye have an unction from the Holy One,’ and every man and woman who has a living grasp of the living Christ, receives from Him this great gift.

Then, notice further that this anointing by a Divine Spirit, which is a true source of life to those that possess it, is derived from, and parallel with, Christ's anointing. We use the word ‘Christ’ as a proper name, and forget what it means. The ‘Christ’ is *the Anointed One*. And do you think that it was a mere accident, or the

result of a scanty vocabulary, which compelled the Apostle, in these two contiguous clauses, to use cognate words when he said:—'He that establisheth us with you in the *Anointed*, and hath *anointed* us, is God'? Did he not mean to say thereby, 'Each of you in a very true sense, if you are a Christian, is a *Christ*'? You, too, are anointed; you, too, are God's Messiahs. On you in a measure the same Spirit rests which dwelt without measure in Him. The chief of Christ's gifts to the Church is the gift of His own life. All His brethren are anointed with the oil that was poured upon His head, even as the oil upon Aaron's locks percolated to the very skirts of his garments. Being anointed with the anointing which was on Him, all His people may claim an identity of nature, may hope for an identity of destiny, and are bound to a prolongation of part of His function and a similarity of character. If He by that anointing was made Prophet, Priest, and King for the world, all His children partake of these offices in subordinate but real fashion, and are prophets to make God known to men, priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and kings at least over themselves, and, if they will, over a world which obeys and serves those that serve and love God. Ye are anointed—'Messiahs' and 'Christs,' by derivation of the life of Jesus Christ.

And if these things be true, it is plain enough how this divine unction, which is granted to all Christians, lies at the root of steadfastness.

We talk a great deal about the gentleness of

Christ; we cannot celebrate it too much, but we may forget that it is the gentleness of strength. We do not sufficiently mark the masculine features in that character, the tremendous tenacity of will, the inflexible fixedness of purpose, the irremovable constancy of obedience in the face of all temptations to the contrary. The figure that rises before us is that of the Christ yearning over weaklings far oftener than it is that of the Christ with knitted brow, and tightened lips, and far-off gazing eye, 'steadfastly setting His face to go to Jerusalem,' and followed as He pressed up the rocky road from Jericho, by that wondering group, astonished at the rigidity of purpose that was stamped on His features. That Christ gives us His Spirit to make us tenacious, constant, righteously obstinate, inflexible in the pursuit of all that is lovely and of good report, like Himself. That Divine Spirit will cure the fickleness of our natures; for our wills are never fixed till they are fixed in obedience, and never free until they elect to serve Him. That Divine Spirit will cure the wandering of our hearts and bind us to Himself. It will lift us above the selfish and cowardly dependence on externals and surroundings, men and things, in which we are all tempted to live. We are all too like aneroid barometers, that go up and down with every variation of a foot or two in our level, but if we have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, it will cut the bonds that bind us to the world, and give us possession of a deeper love than can be sustained by, or is

derived from, these superficial sources. The true possession of the Divine Spirit, if I might use such a metaphor, sets a man on an insulating stool, and all the currents that move round about him are powerless to reach him. If we have that Divine Spirit within us, it will give us an experience of the preciousness and the truth, the certitude and the sweetness, of Christ's Gospel, which will make it impossible that we should ever cast away the confidence which has such ‘recompense of reward.’ No man will be surely bound to the truth and person of Christ with bonds that cannot be snapped, except he who in his heart has the knowledge of Him which is possession, and by the gift of the Divine Spirit is knit to Jesus Christ.

So, dear friends, whilst the world is full of wise words about steadfastness, and exalts determination of character and fixity of purpose, rightly, as the basis of much good, our Gospel comes to us poor, light, thistledown creatures, and lets us see how we can be steadfast and settled by being fastened to a steadfast and settled Christ. When storms are raging they lash light articles on deck to holdfasts. Let us lash ourselves to the abiding Christ, and we, too, shall abide.

II. In the next place, notice the aim or purpose of this Christian steadfastness.

‘He stablisheth us with you in Christ,’ or as the original has it even more significantly, *into* or

'*unto* Christ.' Now that seems to me to imply two things—first, that our steadfastness, made possible by our possession of that Divine Spirit, is steadfastness in our relations to Jesus Christ. We are established in reference or in regard to Him. In other words, what Paul here means is, first, a fixed conviction of the truth that He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and my Saviour. That is the first step. Men who are steadfast without their intellect guiding and settling the steadfastness are not steadfast, but obstinate and pigheaded. We are meant to be guided by our understandings, and no fixity is anything better than the immobility of a stone, unless it be based upon a distinct and whole-brained intellectual acceptance of Jesus Christ as the All-in-all for us, for life and death, for inward and outward being.

Paul means, next, a steadfastness in regard to Christ in our trust and love. Surely if from Him there is for ever streaming out an unbroken flow of tenderness, there should be ever on our sides an equally unbroken opening of our hearts for the reception of His love, and an equally uninterrupted response to it in our grateful affection. There can be no more damning condemnation of the vacillations and fluctuations of Christian men's affections than the steadfastness of Christ's love to them. He loves ever; He is unalterable in the communication and effluence of His heart. Surely it is most fitting that we should be steadfast in our devotion and answering love to

Him. And Paul means not only fixedness of intellectual conviction and continuity of loving response, but also habitual obedience, which is always ready to do His will.

So we should answer His 'Yea!' with our 'Amen!' and having an unchanging Christ to rest upon, we should rest upon Him unchanging. The broken, fluctuating affections and trusts and obediences which mark so much of the average Christian life of this day are only too sad proofs of how scant our possession of that Spirit of steadfastness must be supposed to be. God's 'Yea' is answered by our faltering 'Amen'; God's truth is hesitatingly accepted; God's love is partially returned; God's work is slothfully and negligently done. 'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'

Another thought is suggested by these words —viz. that such steadfastness as we have been trying to describe has for its result a deeper penetration into Jesus Christ and a fuller possession of Him. The only way by which we can grow nearer and nearer to our Lord is by steadfastly keeping beside Him. You cannot get the spirit of a landscape unless you sit down and gaze, and let it soak into you. The cheap tripper never sees the lake. You cannot get to know a man until you summer and winter with him. No subject worth studying opens itself to the hasty glance. Was it not Sir Isaac Newton who used to say, 'I have no genius, but I keep a subject before me'? 'Abide in Me; as the branch cannot

bear fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in Me.' Continuous, steadfast adhesion to Him is the condition of growing up into His likeness, and receiving more and more of His beauty into our waiting hearts. 'Wait on the Lord; wait, I say, on the Lord.'

III. Lastly, notice the very humble and commonplace sphere in which the Christian steadfastness manifests itself.

It was nothing of more importance than that Paul had said he was going to Corinth, and did not, on which he brings all this array of great principles to bear. From which I gather just this thought, that the highest gifts of God's grace and the greatest truths of God's Word are meant to regulate the tiniest things in our daily life. It is no degradation to the lightning to have to carry messages. It is no profanation of the sun to gather its rays into a burning glass to light a kitchen fire with. And it is no unworthy use of the Divine Spirit that God gives to His children, to say it will keep a man from hasty and precipitate decisions as to little things in life, and from chopping and changing about, with a levity of purpose and without a sufficient reason. If our religion is not going to influence the trifles, what is it going to influence? Our life is made up of trifles, and if these are not its field, where is its field? You may be quite sure that, if your religion does not influence the little things, it will never influence the great ones. If it has not power enough to guide the horses when they

are at a slow, sober walk, what do you think it will do when they are at a gallop and plunging? 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.' So let us see to two things —first, that all our religion is worked into our life, for only so much of it as is so inwrought is our religion—and, second, that all our life is brought under the sway of motives derived from our religion: for only in proportion as it is, will it be pure and good.

And as regards this special virtue and prime quality of steadfastness and fixedness of purpose, you can do no good in the world without it. Unless a man can hold his own, and turn an obstinate negative to the temptations that lie thick about him, he will never come to any good at all, either in this life or in the next. The basis of all excellence is a wholesome disregard of externals, and the cultivation of a strong self-reliant and self-centred, because God-trusting and Christ-centred, will. And I tell you, especially you young men and women, if you want to do or be anything worth doing or being, you must try to get your natures hardened into being 'steadfast, unmovable.' There is only one infallible way of doing it, and that is to let the 'strong Son of God' live in you, and in Him to find your strength for resistance, your strength for obedience, your strength for submission. 'I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.'

There are two types of men in the world. The

one has his emblem in the chaff, rootless, with no hold, swept out of the threshing-floor by every gust of wind. That the picture of many whose principles lie at the mercy of the babble of tongues round about them, whose rectitude goes at a puff of temptation, like the smoke out of a chimney when the wind blows; who have no will for what is good, but live as it happens. The other type of man has his emblem in the tree, rooted deep, and therefore rising high, with its roots going as far underground as its branches spread in the blue, and therefore green of leaf and rich of fruit 'We are made partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence, steadfast until the end.'

SEAL AND EARNEST

> 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'—2 COR. i. 23.

There are three strong metaphors in this and the preceding verse—'anointing,' 'sealing,' and 'giving the earnest'—all of which find their reality in the same divine act. These three metaphors all refer to the same subject, and what that subject is is sufficiently explained in the last of them. The 'earnest' consists of 'the Spirit in our hearts,' and the same explanation might have been appended to both the preceding clauses, for the 'anointing' is the

anointing of the Spirit, and the 'seal' is the seal of the Spirit. Further, these three metaphors all refer to one and the same act. They are not three things, but three aspects of one thing, just as a sunbeam might be regarded either as the source of warmth, or of light, or of chemical action. So the one gift of the one Spirit, 'anoints,' 'seals,' and is the 'earnest.' Further, these three metaphors all declare a universal prerogative of Christians. Every man that loves Jesus Christ has the Spirit in the measure of his faith,' and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.'

I. Note the first metaphor in the text—the 'seal' of the Spirit.

A seal is impressed upon a recipient material made soft by warmth, in order to leave there a copy of itself. Now it is not fanciful, nor riding a metaphor to death, when I dwell upon these features of the emblem in order to suggest their analogies in Christian life. The Spirit of God comes into our spirits, and by gentle contact impresses upon the material, which was intractable until it was melted by the genial warmth of faith and love, the likeness of Himself, but yet so as that prominences correspond to the hollows, and what is in relief in the one is sunk in the other. Expand that general statement for a moment or two.

The effect of all the divine indwelling, which is the characteristic gift of Christ to every

Christian soul, is to mould the recipient into the image of the divine inhabitant. There is in the human spirit—such are its dignity amidst its ruins, and its nobility shining through its degradation—a capacity of receiving that image of God which consists not only in voluntary and intelligent action and the consciousness of personal being, but in the love of the things that are fair, and in righteousness, and true holiness. His Spirit, entering into a heart, will make that heart wise with its own wisdom, strong with some infusion of its own strength, gracious with some drops of its own grace, gentle with some softening from its own gentleness, holy with some purity reflected from its own transcendent whiteness. The Spirit, which is life, moulds the heart into which it enters to a kindred, and, therefore, similar life.

There are, however, characteristics in this 'seal' of the Spirit which are not so much copies as correspondences. That is to say, just as what is convex in the seal is concave in the impression, and *vice versâ*, so, when that Divine Spirit comes into our spirits, its promises will excite faith, its gifts will breed desire; to every bestowment there will answer an opening receptivity. Recipient love will correspond to the love that longs to dispense, the sense of need to the divine fulness and sufficiency, emptiness to abundance, prayers to promises; the cry 'Abba! Father'! the yearning consciousness of sonship, to the word 'Thou art My Son'; and the upward eye of aspiration and petition, and necessity, and

waiting, to the downward glance of love bestowing itself. The open heart answers to the extended hand, and the seal which God's Spirit impresses upon the heart that is submitted to it, has the two-fold character of resemblance in moral nature and righteousness, and of correspondence as regards the mysteries of the converse between the recipient man and the giving God.

Then, mark that the material is made capable of receiving the stamp, because it is warmed and softened. That is to say, faith must prepare the heart for the sanctifying indwelling of that Divine Spirit. The hard wax may be struck with the seal, but it leaves no trace. God does not do with man as the coiner does with his blanks, put them cold into a press, and by violence from without stamp an image upon them, but He does as men do with a seal, warms the wax first, and then, with a gentle, firm touch, leaves the likeness there. So, brother! learn this lesson: if you wish to be good, lie under the contact of the Spirit of righteousness, and see that your heart is warm.

Still further, note that this aggregate of Christian character, in likeness and correspondence, is the true sign that we belong to God. The seal is the mark of ownership, is it not? Where the broad arrow has been impressed, everybody knows that that is royal property. And so this seal of God's Divine Spirit, in its effects upon my character, is the one token to

myself and to other people that I belong to God, and that He belongs to me. Or, to put it into plain English, the best reason for any man's being regarded as a Christian is his possession of the likeness and correspondence to God which that Divine Spirit gives. Likeness and correspondence, I say, for the one class of results is the more open for the observation of the world, and the other class is of the more value for ourselves. I believe that Christian people ought to have, and are meant by that Divine Spirit dwelling in them to have, a consciousness that they are Christians and God's children, for their own peace and rest and joy. But you cannot use that in demonstration to other people; you may be as sure of it as you will, in your inmost hearts, but it is no sign to anybody else. And, on the other hand, there may be much of outward virtue and beauty of character which may lead other people to say about a man: '*That* is a good Christian man, at any rate,' and yet there may be in the heart an all but absolute absence of any joyful assurance that we are Christ's, and that He belongs to us. So the two facts must go together. Correspondence, the spirit of sonship which meets His taking us as sons, the faith which clasps the promise, the reception which welcomes bestowment, must be stamped upon the inward life. For the outward life there must be the manifest impress of righteousness upon my actions, if there is to be any real seal and token that I belong to Him. God writes His own name upon the men that are

His. All their goodness, their gentleness, patience, hatred of evil, energy and strenuousness in service, submission in suffering, with whatsoever other radiance of human virtue may belong to them, are really 'His mark!'

There is no other worth talking about, and to you Christian men I come and say, Be very sure that your professions of inward communion and happy consciousness that you are Christ's are verified to yourself and to others by a plain outward life of righteousness like the Lord's. Have you got that seal stamped upon your lives, like the hall-mark that says, 'This is genuine silver, and no plated Brummagem stuff'? Have you got that seal of a visible righteousness and every-day purity to confirm your assertion that you belong to Christ? Is it woven into the whole length of your being, like the scarlet thread that is spun into every Admiralty cable as a sign that it is Crown property? God's seal, visible to me and to nobody else, is my consciousness that I am His; but that consciousness is vindicated and delivered from the possibility of illusion or hypocrisy, only when it is checked and fortified by the outward evidence of the holy life which the Spirit of God has wrought.

Further, this sealing, which is thus the token of God's ownership, is also the pledge of security. A seal is stamped in order that there may be no tampering with what it seals; that it may be kept safe from all assaults, thieves, and violence. And in the metaphor of our text there

is included this thought, too, which is also of an intensely practical nature. For it just comes to this—our true guarantee that we shall come at last into the sweet security and safety of the perfect state is present likeness to the indwelling Spirit and present reception of divine grace. The seal is the pledge of security, just because it is the mark of ownership. When, by God's Spirit dwelling in us, we are led to love the things that are fair, and to long after more possession of whatever things are of good report, that is like God's hoisting His flag upon a newly-annexed territory. And is He going to be so careless in the preservation of His property as that He will allow that which is thus acquired to slip away from Him? Does He account us as of so small value as to hold us with so slack a hand? But no man has a right to rest on the assurance of God's saving him into the heavenly kingdom, unless He is saving him at this moment from the devil and his own evil heart. And, therefore, I say the Christian character, in its outward manifestations and in its sweet inward secrets of communion, is the guarantee that we shall not fall. Rest upon Him, and He will hold you up. We are ‘kept by the power of God unto salvation,’ and that power keeps us and that final salvation becomes ours, ‘through faith.’

II. Now, secondly, turn to the other emblem, that ‘earnest’ which consists in like manner ‘of the Spirit.’

The ‘earnest,’ of course, is a small portion of

purchase-money, or wages, or contract-money, which is given at the making of a bargain, as an assurance that the whole amount will be paid in due time. And, says the Apostle, this seal is also an earnest. It not only makes certain God's ownership and guarantees the security of those on whom it is impressed, but it also points onwards to the future, and at once guarantees that, and to a large extent reveals the nature of it. So, then, we have here two thoughts on which I touch.

The Christian character and experience are the earnest of the inheritance, in the sense of being its guarantee, inasmuch as the experiences of the Christian life here are plainly immortal. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the objective and external proof of a future life. The facts of the Christian life, its aspirations, its communion, its clasp of God as its very own, are the subjective and inward proofs of a future life. As a matter of fact, if you will take the Old Testament, you will see that the highest summits in it, to which the hope of immortality soared, spring directly from the experience of deep and blessed communion with the living God. When the Psalmist said 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in *Sheol*; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption,' he was speaking a conviction that had been floated into his mind on the crest of a great wave of religious enjoyment and communion. And, in like manner, when the other Psalmist said, 'Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever,' he was speaking

of the glimpse that he had got of the land that was very far off, from the height which he had climbed on the Mount of fellowship with God. And for us, I suppose that the same experience holds good. Howsoever much we may say that we believe in a future life and in a heaven, we really grasp them as facts that will be true about ourselves, in the proportion in which we are living here in direct contact and communion with God. The conviction of immortality is the distinct and direct result of the present enjoyment of communion with Him, and it is a reasonable result. No man who has known what it is to turn himself to God with a glow of humble love, and to feel that he is not turning his face to vacuity, but to a Face that looks on him with love, can believe that anything can ever come to destroy that communion. What have faith, love, aspiration, resignation, fellowship with God, to do with death? They cannot be cut through with the stroke that destroys physical life, any more than you can divide a sunbeam with a sword. It unites again, and the impotent edge passes through and has effected nothing. Death can shear asunder many bonds, but that invisible bond that unites the soul to God is of adamant, against which his scythe is in vain. Death is the grim porter that opens the door of a dark hole and herds us into it as sheep are driven into a slaughter-house. But to those who have learned what it is to lay a trusting hand in God's hand, the grim porter is turned into the gentle damsel, who keeps the

door, and opens it for light and warmth and safety to the hunted prisoner that has escaped from the dungeon of life. Death cannot touch communion, and the consciousness of communion with God is the earnest of the inheritance.

It is so for another reason also. All the results of the Divine Spirit's sealing of the soul are manifestly incomplete, and as manifestly tend towards completeness. The engine is clearly working now at half-speed. It is obviously capable of much higher pressure than it is going at now. Those powers in the Christian man can plainly do a great deal more than they ever have done here, and are meant to do a great deal more. Is this imperfect Christianity of ours, our little faith so soon shattered, our little love so quickly disproved, our faltering resolutions, our lame performances, our earthward cleavings—are these things all that Jesus Christ's bitter agony was for, and all that a Divine Spirit is able to make of us? Manifestly, here is but a segment of the circle, in heaven is the perfect round; and the imperfections, so far as life is concerned, in the work of so obviously divine an Agent, cry aloud for a region where tendency shall become result, and all that it was possible for Him to make us we shall become. The road evidently leads upwards, and round that sharp corner where the black rocks come so near each other and our eyesight cannot travel, we may be sure it goes steadily up still to the top of the pass, until it reaches ‘the shining table-lands whereof

our God Himself is Sun and Moon,' and brings us all to the city set on a hill.

And, further, that divine seal is the earnest, inasmuch as itself is part of the whole. The truest and the loftiest conception that we can form of heaven is as being the perfecting of the religious experience of earth. The shilling or two, given to the servant in old-fashioned days, when he was hired, is of the same currency as the balance that he is to get when the year's work is done. The small payment to-day comes out of the same purse, and is coined out of the same specie, and is part of the same currency of the same kingdom, as what we get when we go yonder and count the endless riches to which we have fallen heirs at last. You have but to take the faith, the love, the obedience, the communion of the highest moments of the Christian life on earth, and free them from all their limitations, subtract from them all their imperfections, multiply them to their superlative possibility, and endow them with a continual power of growth, and stretch them out to absolute eternity, and you get heaven. The earnest is of a piece with the inheritance.

So, dear brethren, here is a gift offered for us all, a gift which our feebleness sorely needs, a gift for every timid nature, for every weak will, for every man, woman, and child beset with snares and fighting with heavy tasks, the offer of a reinforcement as real and as sure to bring victory as when, on that day when the fate of

Europe was determined, after long hours of conflict, the Prussian bugles blew, and the English commander knew that (with the fresh troops that came on the field) victory was made certain. So you and I may have in our hearts the Spirit of God, the spirit of strength, the spirit of love and of a sound mind, the spirit of adoption, the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, to enlighten our darkness, to bind our hearts to Him, to quicken and energise our souls, to make the weakest among us strong, and the strong as an angel of God. And the condition on which we may get it is this simple one which the Apostle lays down; '*After that ye believed*, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' The Christ, who is the Lord and Giver of the Spirit, has shown us how its blessed influences may be ours when, on the great day of the feast, He stood and cried with a voice that echoes across the centuries, and is meant for each of us, 'If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit which they that believe or Him should receive.'

THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION

'Thanks be unto God, which always
leadeth us in triumph in Christ and

> maketh manifest through us the
> savour of His knowledge in every
> place.'—2 COR. ii. 14 (R. V.)

I suppose most of us have some knowledge of what a Roman Triumph was, and can picture to ourselves the long procession, the victorious general in his chariot with its white horses, the laurelled soldiers, the sullen captives, with suppressed hate flashing in their sunken eyes, the wreathing clouds of incense that went up into the blue sky, and the shouting multitude of spectators. That is the picture in the Apostle's mind here. The Revised Version correctly alters the translation into 'Thanks unto God which always *leadeth us in* triumph in Christ.'

Paul thinks of himself and of his coadjutors in Christian work as being conquered captives, made to follow their Conqueror and to swell His triumph. He is thankful to be so overcome. What was deepest degradation is to him supreme honour. Curses in many a strange tongue would break from the lips of the prisoners who had to follow the general's victorious chariot. But from Paul's lips comes irrepressible praise; he joins in the shout of acclamation to the Conqueror.

And then he passes on to another of the parts of the ceremonial. As the wreathing incense appealed at once to two senses, and was visible in its curling clouds of smoke, and likewise fragrant to the nostrils, so says Paul, with a singular combination of expression, 'He maketh

manifest,' that is visible, the *savour* of His knowledge. From a heart kindled by the flame of the divine love there will go up the odour of a holy life visible and fragrant, sweet and fair.

And thus all Christians, and not Christian workers only in the narrower sense of the word, who may be doing evangelistic work, have set before them in these great words the very ideal and secret of their lives.

There are three things here, on each of which I touch as belonging to the true notion of a Christian life—the conquered captive; that captive partaking in the triumph of his Conqueror; and the conquered captive led as a trophy and a witness to the Conqueror's power. These three things, I think, explain the Apostle's thoughts here. Let me deal with them now.

I. First then, let us look at that thought of all Christians being in the truest sense conquered captives, bound to the chariot wheels of One who has overcome them.

The image implies a prior state of hostility and alienation. Now, do not let us exaggerate, let us take Paul's own experience. He is speaking about himself here; he is not talking doctrine, he is giving us autobiography, and he says, 'I was an enemy, and I have been conquered.'

What sort of an enemy was he? Well! He says that before he became a Christian he lived a pure, virtuous, respectable life. He was a man 'as

touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.' Observant of all relative duties, sober, temperate, chaste; no man could say a word against him; he knew nothing against himself. His conscience acquitted him of wrong: 'I thought I ought to do many things,' as I did them. And yet, looking back from his present point of view upon a life thus adorned with many virtues, pure from all manifest corruption, to a large extent regulated by conscientious and religious motives of a kind, he says, 'Notwithstanding all that, I was an enemy.' Why? Because the retrospect let him see that his life was barren of the deepest faith and the purest love. And so I come to some of my friends here now, and I say to you, 'Change the name, and the story is true about you,' respectable people, who are trying to live pure and righteous lives, doing all duties that present themselves to you with a very tolerable measure of completeness and abominating and trying to keep yourselves from the things that your consciences tell you are wrong, yet needing to be conquered, in the deepest recesses of your wills and your hearts, before you become the true subjects of the true King. I do not want to exaggerate, nor to say of the ordinary run of people who listen to us preachers, that they commit manifest sins, 'gross as a mountain, open, palpable.' Some of you do, no doubt, for, in every hundred people, there are always some whose lives are foul and whose memories are stained and horrible; but the run of you are not

like that. And yet I ask you, has your will been bowed and broken, and your heart overcome and conquered by this mighty Prince, the Prince of Peace, the Prince of Life? Unless it has, for all your righteousness and respectability, for all your outward religion and real religiousness of a sort, you are still hostile and rebellious, in your inmost hearts. That is the basis of the representation of my text.

What else does it suggest? It suggests the wonderful struggle and victory of weaponless love. As was said about the first Christian emperor, so it may be said about the great Emperor in the heavens, '*In hoc signo vinces!*' By this sign thou shalt conquer. For His only weapon is the Cross of His Son, and He fights only by the manifestation of infinite love, sacrifice, suffering, and pity. He conquers as the sun conquers the thick-ribbed ice by raying down its heat upon it, and melting it into sweet water. So God in Christ fights against the mountains of man's cold, hard sinfulness and alienation, and by the warmth of His own radiation turns them all into rivers that flow in love and praise. He conquers simply by forbearance and pity and love.

And what more does this first part of my text say to us? It tells us, too, of the true submission of the conquered captive; how we are conquered when we perceive and receive His love; how there is nothing else needed to win us all for Him except only that we shall recognise His

great love to us.

This picture of the triumph comes with a solemn appeal and commandment to every one of us professing Christians. Think of these men, dragged at the conqueror's chariot-wheels, abject, with their weapons broken, with their resistance quelled, chained, yoked, haled away from their own land, dependant for life or death on the caprice of the general who rode before them there. It is a picture of what you Christian men and women are bound to be if you believe that God in Christ has loved you as we have been saying that He does. For abject submission, unconditional surrender, the yielding up of our whole will to Him, the yielding of all our possessions as His vassals—these are the duties that are correspondent to the facts of the case.

If we are thus won by infinite love, and not our own, but bought with a price, no conquered king, dragged at an emperor's chariot-wheels, was ever half as absolutely and abjectly bound to be his slave, and to live or die by his breath, as you are bound to your Master. You are Christians in the measure in which you are the captives of His spear and of His bow; in the measure in which you hold your territories as vassal kings, in the measure in which you say, stretching out your willing hands for the fetters, ‘Lord! here am I, do with me as Thou wilt.’ ‘I am not mine own; be Thou my will, my Emperor, my Commander, my all.’ Loyola used to say, as the law of his order, that every man that became

a member of the Society of Jesus was to be like as a staff in a man's hand, or like as a corpse. It was a blasphemous and wicked claim, but it is but a poor fragmentary statement of the truth about those of us who enter the real Society of Jesus, and put ourselves in His hands to be wielded as His staff and His rod, and submit ourselves to Him, not as a corpse, but yield yourselves to our Christ ‘as those that are alive from the dead.’

II. Now we have here, as part of the ideal of the Christian life, the conquered captives partaking in the triumph of their general.

Two groups made up the triumphal procession —the one that of the soldiers who had fought for, the other that of the prisoners who had fought against, the leader. And some commentators are inclined to believe that the Apostle is here thinking of himself and his fellows as belonging to the conquering army, and not to the conquered enemy. That seems to me to be less probable and in accordance with the whole image than the explanation which I have adopted. But be that as it may, it suggests to us this thought, that in the deepest reality in that Christian life of which all this metaphor is but the expression, they who are conquered foes become conquering allies. Or, to put it into other words—to be triumphed over by Christ is to triumph with Christ. And the praise which breaks from the Apostle's lips suggests the same idea. He pours out his thanks for that which he

recognises as being no degradation but an honour, and a participation in his Conqueror's triumph.

We may illustrate that thought, that to be triumphed over by Christ is to triumph with Christ, by such considerations as these. This submission of which I have been speaking, abject and unconditional, extending to life and death, this submission and captivity is but another name for liberty. The man who is absolutely dependent upon Jesus Christ is absolutely independent of everything and everybody besides, himself included. That is to say, to be His slave is to be everybody else's master, and when we bow ourselves to Him, and take upon us the chains of glad obedience, and life-deep as well as life-long consecration, then He breaks off all other chains from our hands, and will not suffer that any others should have a share with Him in the possession of His servant. If you are His servants you are free from all besides; if you give yourselves up to Jesus Christ, in the measure in which you give yourselves up to Him, you will be set at liberty from the worst of all slaveries, that is the slavery of your own will and your own weakness, and your own tastes and fancies. You will be set at liberty from dependence upon men, from thinking about their opinion. You will be set at liberty from your dependence upon externals, from feeling as if you could not live unless you had this, that, or the other person or thing. You will be emancipated from fears and hopes which

torture the men who strike their roots no deeper than this visible film of time which floats upon the surface of the great, invisible abyss of Eternity. If you have Christ for your Master you will be the masters of the world, and of time and sense and men and all besides; and so, being triumphed over by Him, you will share in His triumph.

And again, we may illustrate the same principle in yet another way. Such absolute and entire submission of will and love as I have been speaking about is the highest honour of a man. It was a degradation to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of conquering general, emperor, or consul—it broke the heart of many a barbarian king, and led some of them to suicide rather than face the degradation. It is a degradation to submit ourselves, even as much as many of us do, to the domination of human authorities, or to depend upon men as much as many of us do for our completeness and our satisfaction. But it is the highest ennobling of humanity that it shall lay itself down at Christ's feet, and let Him put His foot upon its neck. It is the exaltation of human nature to submit to Christ. The true nobility are those that ‘come over with the Conqueror.’ When we yield ourselves to Him, and let Him be our King, then the patent of nobility is given to us, and we are lifted in the scale of being. All our powers and faculties are heightened in their exercise, and made more blessed in their employment, because we have bowed ourselves to His control. And so to be

triumphed over by Christ is to triumph with Christ.

And the same thought may be yet further illustrated. That submission which I have been speaking about so unites us to our Lord that we share in all that belongs to Him and thus partake in His triumph. If in will and heart we have yielded ourselves to Him, he that is thus joined to the Lord is one spirit, and all ‘mine is Thine, and all Thine is mine.’ He is the Heir of all things, and all things of which He is the Heir are our possession. ‘All things are yours, and ye are Christ's.’ Thus His dominion is the dominion of all that love Him, and His heritage is the heritage of all those that have joined themselves to Him; and no sparkle of the glory that falls upon His head but is reflected on the heads of His servants. The ‘many crowns’ that He wears are the crowns with which He crowns His followers.

Thus, my brother, to be overcome by God is to overcome the world, to be triumphed over by Christ is to share in His triumph; and he over whom Incarnate Love wins the victory, like the patriarch of old in his mystical struggle, conquers in the hour of surrender; and to him it is said: ‘As a prince thou hast power with God and hast prevailed.’

III. Lastly, a further picture of the ideal of the Christian life is set before us here in the thought of these conquered captives being led as the

trophies and the witnesses of His overcoming power.

That idea is suggested by both halves of our verse. Both the emblem of the Apostle as marching in the triumphal procession, and the emblem of the Apostle as yielding from his burning heart the fragrant visible odour of the ascending incense, convey the same idea, viz. that one great purpose which Jesus Christ has in conquering men for Himself, and binding them to His chariot wheels, is that from them may go forth the witness of His power and the knowledge of His name.

That opens very wide subjects for our consideration which I can only very briefly touch upon. Let me just for an instant dwell upon some of them. First, the fact that Jesus Christ, by His Cross and Passion, is able to conquer men's wills, and to bind men's hearts to Him, is the highest proof of His power. It is an entirely unique thing in the history of the world. There is nothing the least like it anywhere else. The passionate attachment which this dead Galilean peasant is able to evoke in the hearts of people all these centuries after His death, is an unheard of and an unparalleled thing. All other teachers ‘serve their generations by the will of God,’ and then their names become speedily less and less powerful, and thicker and thicker mists of oblivion wrap them round until they disappear. But time has no power over Christ's influence. The bond which binds you and me to

Him nineteen centuries after His death is the very same in quality as, and in degree is often far deeper and stronger than, the bond which united to Him the men that had seen Him. It stands as an unique fact in the history of the world, that from Christ of Nazareth there rays out through all the ages the spiritual power which absolutely takes possession of men, dominates them and turns them into His organs and instruments. This generation prides itself upon testing all things by an utilitarian test, and about every system says:—'Well, let us see it working.' And I do not think that Christianity need shrink from the test. With all its imperfections, the long procession of holy men and women who, for nineteen centuries, have been marching through history, owning Christ as their Conqueror, and ascribing all their goodness to Him, is a witness to His power to sway and to satisfy men, the force of whose testimony it is hard to overthrow. And I would like to ask the simple question: Will any system of belief or of no belief, except the faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice, do the like for men? He leads through the world the train of His captives, the evidence of His conquests.

And then, further, let me remind you that out of this representation there comes a very stimulating and solemn suggestion of duty for us Christian people. We are bound to live, setting forth whose we are, and what He has done for us. Just as the triumphal procession took its path up the Appian Way and along the side of the

Forum to the altar of the Capitol, wreathed about by curling clouds of fragrant incense, so we should march through the world encompassed by the sweet and fragrant odour of His name, witnessing for Him by word, witnessing for Him by character, speaking for Him and living like Him, showing in our life that He rules us, and professing by our words that He does; and so should manifest His power.

Still further, Paul's thanksgiving teaches us that we should be thankful for all opportunities of doing such work. Christian men and women often grudge their services and grudge their money, and feel as if the necessities for doing Christian work in the world were rather a burden than an honour. This man's generous heart was so full of love to his Prince that it glowed with thankfulness at the thought that Christ had let him do such things for Him. And He lets you do them if you will.

So, dear friends, it comes to be a very solemn question for us. What part are we playing in that great triumphal procession? We are all of us marching at His chariot wheels, whether we know it or not. But there were two sets of people in the old triumph. There were those who were conquered by force and unconquered in heart, and out of their eyes gleamed unquenchable malice and hatred, though their weapons were broken and their arms fettered. And there were those who, having shared in the commander's fight, shared in his triumph and rejoiced in his

rule. And when the procession reached the gate of the temple, some, at any rate, of the former class were put to death before the gates. I pray you to remember that if we are dragged after Him reluctantly, the word will come: ‘These, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me.’ Whereas, on the other hand, for those who have yielded heart and soul to Him in love and submission born of the reception of His great love, the blessed word will come: ‘He that overcometh shall inherit all things.’ Which of the two parts of the procession do you belong to, my friend? Make your choice where you shall march, and whether you will be His loyal allies and soldiers who share in His triumph, or His enemies, who, overcome by His power, are not melted by His love. The one live, the other perish.

TRANSFORMATION BY BEHOLDING

> 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.'—2 COR. iii. 18.

This whole section of the Epistle in which our text occurs is a remarkable instance of the fervid richness of the Apostle's mind, which acquires force by motion, and, like a chariot-wheel, catches fire as it revolves. One of the most obvious peculiarities of his style is his habit of 'going off at a word.' Each thought is, as it were, barbed all round, and catches and draws into sight a multitude of others, but slightly related to the main purpose in hand. And this characteristic gives at first sight an appearance of confusion to his writings. But it is not confusion, it is richness. The luxuriant underwood which this fertile soil bears, as some tropical forest, does not choke the great trees, though it drapes them.

Paul's immediate purpose seems to be to illustrate the frank openness which ought to mark the ministry of Christianity. He does this by reference to the veil which Moses wore when he came forth from talking with God. There, he says in effect, we have a picture of the Old

Dispensation—a partial revelation, gleaming through a veil, flashing through symbols, expressed here in a rite, there in a type, there again in an obscure prophecy, but never or scarcely ever fronting the world with an unveiled face and the light of God shining clear from it. Christianity is, and Christian teachers ought to be, the opposite of all this. It has, and they are to have, no esoteric doctrines, no hints where plain speech is possible, no reserve, no use of symbols and ceremonies to overlay truth, but an intelligible revelation in words and deeds, to men's understandings. It and they are plentifully to declare the thing as it is.

But he gets far beyond this point in his uses of his illustration. It opens out into a series of contrasts between the two revelations. The veiled Moses represents the clouded revelation of old. The vanishing gleam on his face recalls the fading glories of that which was abolished; and then, by a quick turn of association, Paul thinks of the veiled readers in the synagogues, copies, as it were, of the lawgiver with the shrouded countenance; only too significant images of the souls obscured by prejudice and obstinate unbelief, with which Israel trifles over the uncomprehended letter of the old law.

The contrast to all this lies in our text. Judaism had the one lawgiver who beheld God, while the people tarried below. Christianity leads us all, to the mount of vision, and lets the lowliest pass through the fences, and go up

where the blazing glory is seen. Moses veiled the face that shone with the irradiation of Deity. We with unveiled face are to shine among men. He had a momentary gleam, a transient brightness; we have a perpetual light. Moses' face shone, but the lustre was but skin deep. But the light that we have is inward, and works transformation into its own likeness.

So there is here set forth the very loftiest conception of the Christian life as direct vision, universal, manifest to men, permanent, transforming.

I. Note then, first, that the Christian life is a life of contemplating and reflecting Christ.

It is a question whether the single word rendered in our version 'beholding as in a glass,' means that, or 'reflecting as a glass does.' The latter seems more in accordance with the requirements of the context, and with the truth of the matter in hand. Unless we bring in the notion of reflected lustre, we do not get any parallel with the case of Moses. Looking into a glass does not in the least correspond with the allusion, which gave occasion to the whole section, to the glory of God smiting him on the face, till the reflected lustre with which it glowed became dazzling, and needed to be hid. And again, if Paul is here describing Christian vision of God as only indirect, as in a mirror, then that would be a point of inferiority in us as compared with Moses, who saw Him face to

face. But the whole tone of the context prepares us to expect a setting forth of the particulars in which the Christian attitude towards the manifested God is above the Jewish. So, on the whole, it seems better to suppose that Paul meant 'mirroring,' than 'seeing in a mirror.'

But, whatever be the exact force of the word, the thing intended includes both acts. There is no reflection of the light without a previous reception of the light. In bodily sight, the eye is a mirror, and there is no sight without an image of the thing perceived being formed in the perceiving eye. In spiritual sight, the soul which beholds is a mirror, and at once beholds and reflects. Thus, then, we may say that we have in our text the Christian life described as one of contemplation and manifestation of the light of God.

The great truth of a direct, unimpeded vision, as belonging to Christian men on earth, sounds strange to many of us. 'That cannot be,' you say; 'does not Paul himself teach that we see through a glass darkly? Do we not walk by faith and not by sight? "No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see Him"; and besides that absolute impossibility, have we not veils of flesh and sense, to say nothing of the covering of sin "spread over the face of all nations," which hide from us even so much of the eternal light as His servants above behold, who see His face and bear His name on their foreheads?'

But these apparent difficulties drop away when we take into account two things—first, the object of vision, and second, the real nature of the vision itself.

As to the former, who is the Lord whose glory we receive on our unveiled faces? He is Jesus Christ. Here, as in the overwhelming majority of instances where *Lord* occurs in the New Testament, it is the name of the manifested God our brother. The glory which we behold and give back is not the incomprehensible, incommunicable lustre of the absolute divine perfectness, but that glory which, as John says, we beheld in Him who tabernacled with us, full of grace and truth; the glory which was manifested in loving, pitying words and loveliness of perfect deeds; the glory of the will resigned to God, and of God dwelling in and working through the will; the glory of faultless and complete manhood, and therein of the express image of God.

And as for the vision itself, that seeing which is denied to be possible is the bodily perception and the full comprehension of the Infinite God; that seeing which is affirmed to be possible, and actually bestowed in Christ, is the beholding of Him with the soul by faith; the immediate direct consciousness of His presence the perception of Him in His truth by the mind, the feeling of Him in His love by the heart, the contact with His gracious energy in our recipient and opening spirits. Faith is made the antithesis of sight. It is

so, in certain respects. But faith is also paralleled with and exalted above the mere bodily perception. He who believing grasps the living Lord has a contact with Him as immediate and as real as that of the eyeball with light, and knows Him with a certitude as reliable as that which sight gives. 'Seeing is believing,' says sense; 'Believing is seeing' says the spirit which clings to the Lord, 'whom having not seen' it loves. A bridge of perishable flesh, which is not myself but my tool, connects me with the outward world. *It* never touches myself at all, and I know it only by trust in my senses. But nothing intervenes between my Lord and me, when I love and trust. Then Spirit is joined to spirit, and of His presence I have the witness in myself. He is the light, which proves its own existence by revealing itself, which strikes with quickening impulse on the eye of the spirit that beholds by faith. Believing we see, and, seeing, we have that light in our souls to be 'the master light of all our seeing.' We need not think that to know by the consciousness of our trusting souls is less than to know by the vision of our fallible eyes; and though flesh hides from us the spiritual world in which we float, yet the only veil which really dims God to us—the veil of sin, the one separating principle—is done away in Christ, for all who love Him; so as that he who has not seen and yet has believed, has but the perfecting of his present vision to expect, when flesh drops away and the apocalypse of the heaven comes. True, in one view, 'We see

through a glass darkly'; but also true, 'We all, with unveiled face, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord.'

Then note still further Paul's emphasis on the universality of this prerogative—'We all.' This vision does not belong to any select handful; does not depend upon special powers or gifts, which in the nature of things can only belong to a few. The spiritual aristocracy of God's Church is not the distinction of the law-giver, the priest or the prophet. There is none of us so weak, so low, so ignorant, so compassed about with sin, but that upon our happy faces that light may rest, and into our darkened hearts that sunshine may steal.

In that Old Dispensation, the light that broke through clouds was but that of the rising morning. It touched the mountain tops of the loftiest spirits: a Moses, a David, an Elijah caught the early gleams; while all the valleys slept in the pale shadow, and the mist clung in white folds to the plains. But the noon has come, and, from its steadfast throne in the very zenith, the sun, which never sets, pours down its rays into the deep recesses of the narrowest gorge, and every little daisy and hidden flower catches its brightness, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. We have no privileged class or caste now; no fences to keep out the mob from the place of vision, while lawgiver and priest gaze upon God. Christ reveals Himself to all His servants in the measure of their desire after Him.

Whatsoever special gifts may belong to a few in His Church, the greatest gift belongs to all. The servants and the handmaidens have the Spirit, the children prophesy, the youths see visions, the old men dream dreams. ‘The mobs,’ ‘the masses,’ ‘the plebs,’ or whatever other contemptuous name the heathen aristocratic spirit has for the bulk of men, makes good its standing within the Church, as possessor of Christ's chiefest gifts. Redeemed by Him, it can behold His face and be glorified into His likeness. Not as Judaism with its ignorant mass, and its enlightened and inspired few—we *all* behold the glory of the Lord.

Again, this contemplation involves reflection, or giving forth the light which we behold.

They who behold Christ have Christ formed in them, as will appear in my subsequent remarks. But apart from such considerations, which belong rather to the next part of this sermon, I touch on this thought here for one purpose—to bring out this idea—that what we *see* we shall certainly *show*. That will be the inevitable result of all true possession of the glory of Christ. The necessary accompaniment of vision is reflecting the thing beheld. Why, if you look closely enough into a man's eye, you will see in it little pictures of what he beholds at the moment; and if our hearts are beholding Christ, Christ will be mirrored and manifested on our hearts. Our characters will show what we are looking at, and ought, in the case of Christian people, to

bear His image so plainly, that men cannot but take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

This ought to lead all of us who say that we have seen the Lord, to serious self-questioning. Do beholding and reflecting go together in our cases? Are our characters like those transparent clocks, where you can see not only the figures and hands, but the wheels and works? Remember that, consciously and unconsciously, by direct efforts and by insensible influences on our lives, the true secret of our being ought to come, and will come, forth to light. The convictions which we hold, the emotions that are dominant in our hearts, will mould and shape our lives. If we have any deep, living perception of Christ, bystanders looking into our faces will be able to tell what it is up yonder that is making them like the faces of the angels —even vision of the opened heavens and of the exalted Lord. These two things are inseparable— the one describes the attitude and action of the Christian man towards Christ; the other the very same attitude and action in relation to men. And you may be quite sure that, if little light comes from a Christian character, little light comes into it; and if it be swathed in thick veils from men, there must be no less thick veils between it and God.

Nor is it only that our fellowship with Christ will, as a matter of course, show itself in our characters, and beauty born of that communion

‘shall pass into our face,’ but we are also called on, as Paul puts it here, to make direct conscious efforts for the communication of the light which we behold. As the context has it, God hath shined in our hearts, that we might give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. Away with all veils! No reserve, no fear of the consequences of plain speaking, no diplomatic prudence regulating our frank utterance, no secret doctrines for the initiated! We are to ‘renounce the hidden things of dishonesty.’ Our power and our duty lie in the full exhibition of the truth. We are only clear from the blood of men when we, for our parts, make sure that if any light be hid, it is hid not by reason of obscurity or silence on our parts, but only by reason of the blind eyes, before which the full-orbed radiance gleams in vain. All this is as true for every one possessing that universal prerogative of seeing the glory of Christ, as it is for an Apostle. The business of all such is to make known the name of Jesus, and if from idleness, or carelessness, or selfishness, they shirk that plain duty, they are counteracting God's very purpose in shining on their hearts, and going far to quench the light which they darken.

Take this, then, Christian men and women, as a plain practical lesson from this text. You are bound to manifest what you believe, and to make the secret of your lives, in so far as possible, an open secret. Not that you are to drag into light before men the sacred depths of

your own soul's experience. Let these lie hid. The world will be none the better for your confessions, but it needs your Lord. Show Him forth, not your own emotions about Him. What does the Apostle say close by my text? ‘We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.’ Self-respect and reverence for the sanctities of our deepest emotions forbid our proclaiming these from the house-tops. Let these be curtained, if you will, from all eyes but God's, but let no folds hang before the picture of your Saviour that is drawn on your heart. See to it that you have the unveiled face turned towards Christ to be irradiated by His brightness, and the unveiled face turned towards men, from which shall shine every beam of the light which you have caught from your Lord. ‘Arise! shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!’

II. Notice, secondly, that this life of contemplation is therefore a life of gradual transformation.

The brightness on the face of Moses was only skin-deep. It faded away, and left no trace. It effaced none of the marks of sorrow and care, and changed none of the lines of that strong, stern face. But, says Paul, the glory which we behold sinks inward, and changes us as we look, into its own image. Thus the superficial lustre, that had neither permanence nor transforming power, becomes an illustration of the powerlessness of law to change the moral

character into the likeness of the fair ideal which it sets forth. And, in opposition to its weakness, the Apostle proclaims the great principle of Christian progress, that the beholding of Christ leads to the assimilation to Him.

The metaphor of a mirror does not wholly serve us here. When the sunbeams fall upon it, it flashes in the light, just because they do not enter its cold surface. It is a mirror, because it does not drink them up, but flings them back. The contrary is the case with these sentient mirrors of our spirits. In them the light must first sink in before it can ray out. They must first be filled with the glory, before the glory can stream forth. They are not so much like a reflecting surface as like a bar of iron, which needs to be heated right down to its obstinate black core, before its outer skin glows with the whiteness of a heat that is too hot to sparkle. The sunshine must fall on us, not as it does on some lonely hill-side, lighting up the grey stones with a passing gleam that changes nothing, and fades away, leaving the solitude to its sadness; but as it does on some cloud cradled near its setting, which it drenches and saturates with fire till its cold heart burns, and all its wreaths of vapour are brightness palpable, glorified by the light which lives amidst its mists. So must we have the glory sink into us before it can be reflected from us. In deep inward beholding we must have Christ in our hearts, that He may shine forth from our lives.

And this contemplation will be gradual transformation. There is the great principle of Christian morals. 'We all beholding ... are changed.' The power to which is committed the perfecting of our characters lies in looking upon Jesus. It is not the mere beholding, but the gaze of love and trust that moulds us by silent sympathy into the likeness of His wondrous beauty, who is fairer than the children of men. It was a deep, true thought which the old painters had, when they drew John as likest to his Lord. Love makes us like. We learn *that* even in our earthly relationships, where habitual familiarity with parents and dear ones stamps some tone of voice or look, or little peculiarity of gesture, on a whole house. And when the infinite reverence and aspiration which the Christian soul cherishes to its Lord are superadded, the transforming power of loving contemplation of Him becomes mighty beyond all analogies in human friendship, though one in principle with these. What a marvellous thing that a block of rude sandstone, laid down before a perfect marble, should become a copy of its serene loveliness just by lying there! Lay your hearts down before Christ. Contemplate Him. Love Him. Think about Him. Let that pure face shine upon heart and spirit, and as the sun photographs itself on the sensitive plate exposed to its light, and you get a likeness of the sun by simply laying the thing in the sun, so He will 'be formed in, you.' Iron near a magnet becomes magnetic. Spirits that dwell with Christ become

Christ-like. The Roman Catholic legends put this truth in a coarse way, when they tell of saints who have gazed on some ghastly crucifix till they have received, in their tortured flesh, the copy of the wounds of Jesus, and have thus borne in their body the marks of the Lord. The story is hideous and gross, the idea beneath is ever true. Set your faces towards the Cross with loving, reverent gaze, and you will 'be conformed unto His death,' that in due time you may 'be also in the likeness of His Resurrection.'

Dear friends, surely this message—'Behold and be like'—ought to be very joyful and enlightening to many of us, who are wearied with painful struggles after isolated pieces of goodness, that elude our grasp. You have been trying, and trying, and trying half your lifetime to cure faults and make yourselves better and stronger. Try this other plan. Let love draw you, instead of duty driving you. Let fellowship with Christ elevate you, instead of seeking to struggle up the steeps on hands and knees. Live in sight of your Lord, and catch His Spirit. The man who travels with his face northwards has it grey and cold. Let him turn to the warm south, where the midday sun dwells, and his face will glow with the brightness that he sees. 'Looking unto Jesus' is the sovereign cure for all our ills and sins. It is the one condition of running with patience 'the race that is set before us.' Efforts after self-improvement which do not rest on it will not go deep enough, nor end in victory. But from that gaze will flow into our lives a power which will

at once reveal the true goal, and brace every sinew for the struggle to reach it. Therefore, let us cease from self, and fix our eyes on our Saviour till His image imprints itself on our whole nature.

Such transformation, it must be remembered, comes gradually. The language of the text regards it as a lifelong process. 'We *are* changed'; that is a continuous operation. 'From glory to glory'; that is a course which has well-marked transitions and degrees. Be not impatient if it be slow. It will take a lifetime. Do not fancy that it is finished with you. Life is not long enough for it. Do not be complacent over the partial transformation which you have felt. There is but a fragment of the great image yet reproduced in your soul, a faint outline dimly traced, with many a feature wrongly drawn, with many a line still needed, before it can be called even approximately complete. See to it that you neither turn away your gaze, nor relax your efforts till all that you have beheld in Him is repeated in you.

Likeness to Christ is the aim of all religion. To it conversion is introductory; doctrines, devout emotion, worship and ceremonies, churches and organisations are valuable as auxiliary. Let that wondrous issue of God's mercy be the purpose of our lives, and the end as well as the test of all the things which we call our Christianity. Prize and use them as helps towards it, and remember that they are helps only in proportion as they

show us that Saviour, the image of whom is our perfection, the beholding of whom is our transformation.

III. Notice, lastly, that the life of contemplation finally becomes a life of complete assimilation.

'Changed into the same image, from glory to glory.' The lustrous light which falls upon Christian hearts from the face of their Lord is permanent, and it is progressive. The likeness extends, becomes deeper, truer, every way perfecter, comprehends more and more of the faculties of the man; soaks into him, if I may say so, until he is saturated with the glory; and in all the extent of his being, and in all the depth possible to each part of that whole extent, is like his Lord. That is the hope for heaven, towards which we may indefinitely approximate here, and at which we shall absolutely arrive there. There we expect changes which are impossible here, while compassed with this body of sinful flesh. We look for the merciful exercise of His mighty working to 'change the body of our lowliness, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory'; and that physical change in the resurrection of the just rightly bulks very large in good men's expectations. But we are somewhat apt to think of the perfect likeness of Christ too much in connection with that transformation that begins only after death, and to forget that the main transformation must begin here. The glorious, corporeal life like our

Lord's, which is promised for heaven, is great and wonderful, but it is only the issue and last result of the far greater change in the spiritual nature, which by faith and love begins here. It is good to be clothed with the immortal vesture of the resurrection, and in that to be like Christ. It is better to be like Him in our hearts. His true image is that we should feel as He does, should think as He does, should will as He does; that we should have the same sympathies, the same loves, the same attitude towards God, and the same attitude towards men. It is that His heart and ours should beat in full accord, as with one pulse, and possessing one life. Wherever there is the beginning of that oneness and likeness of spirit, all the rest will come in due time. As the spirit, so the body. The whole nature must be transformed and made like Christ's, and the process will not stop till that end be accomplished in all who love Him. But the beginning here is the main thing which draws all the rest after it as of course. ‘If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.’

And, while this complete assimilation in body and spirit to our Lord is the end of the process which begins here by love and faith, my text, carefully considered, adds a further very remarkable idea. ‘We are all changed,’ says Paul, ‘into the *same* image.’ Same as what? Possibly the same as we behold; but more probably the

phrase, especially ‘image’ in the singular, is employed to convey the thought of the blessed likeness of all who become perfectly like Him. As if he had said, ‘Various as we are in disposition and character, unlike in the histories of our lives, and all the influences that these have had upon us, differing in everything but the common relation to Jesus Christ, we are all growing like the same image, and we shall come to be perfectly like it, and yet each retain his own distinct individuality.’ ‘We being many are one, for we are all partakers of one.’

Perhaps, too, we may connect with this another idea which occurs more than once in Paul's Epistles. In that to the Ephesians, for instance, he says that the Christian ministry is to continue, till a certain point of progress has been reached, which he describes as our *all* coming to ‘a perfect *man*.’ The whole of us together make a perfect man—the whole make one image. That is to say, perhaps the Apostle's idea is, that it takes the aggregated perfectness of the whole Catholic Church, one throughout all ages, and containing a multitude that no man can number, to set worthily forth anything like a complete image of the fulness of Christ. No one man, even raised to the highest pitch of perfection, and though his nature be widened out to perfect development, can be the full image of that infinite sum of all beauty; but the whole of us taken together, with all the diversities of natural character retained and consecrated, being collectively His body which He vitalises, may, on the whole, be a not

wholly inadequate representation of our perfect Lord. Just as we set round a central light sparkling prisms, each of which catches the glow at its own angle, and flashes it back of its own colour, while the sovereign completeness of the perfect white radiance comes from the blending of all their separate rays, so they who stand round about the starry throne receive each the light in his own measure and manner, and give forth each a true and perfect, and altogether a complete, image of Him who enlightens them all, and is above them all.

And whilst thus all bear the same image, there is no monotony; and while there is endless diversity, there is no discord. Like the serene choirs of angels in the old monk's pictures, each one with the same tongue of fire on the brow, with the same robe flowing in the same folds to the feet, with the same golden hair, yet each a separate self, with his own gladness, and a different instrument for praise in his hand, and his own part in that ‘undisturbed song of pure content,’ we shall all be changed into the same image, and yet each heart shall grow great with its own blessedness, and each spirit bright with its own proper lustre of individual and characteristic perfection.

The law of the transformation is the same for earth and for heaven. Here we see Him in part, and beholding grow like. There we shall see Him as He is, and the likeness will be complete. That Transfiguration of our Lord (which is described

by the same word as occurs in this text) may become for us the symbol and the prophecy of what we look for. As with Him, so with us; the indwelling glory shall come to the surface, and the countenance shall shine as the light, and the garments shall be 'white as no fuller on earth can white them.' Nor shall that be a fading splendour, nor shall we fear as we enter into the cloud, nor, looking on Him, shall flesh bend beneath the burden, and the eyes become drowsy, but we shall be as the Lawgiver and the Prophet who stood by Him in the lambent lustre, and shone with a brightness above that which had once been veiled on Sinai. We shall never vanish from His side, but dwell with Him in the abiding temple which He has built, and there, looking upon Him for ever, our happy souls shall change as they gaze, and behold Him more perfectly as they change, for 'we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

LOOKING AT THE UNSEEN

> 'While we look not at the things
> which are seen, but at the things
> which are not seen.'—2 COR. iv. 18.

Men may be said to be divided into two classes, materialists and idealists, in the widest sense of those two words. The mass care for, and are occupied by, and regard as really solid good,

those goods which can be touched and enjoyed by sense. The minority—students, thinkers, men of ideas, moralists, and the like—believe in, and care for, impalpable spiritual riches. Everybody admits that the latter class is distinctly the higher. Now it is from no disregard to the importance and reality of that broad distinction that I insist, to begin with, that it is not the antithesis which is in the Apostle's mind here. His notion of ‘the things that are seen’ and ‘the things that are not seen’ is a much grander and wider one than that. By ‘the things that are seen’ he means the whole of this visible world, with all its circumstances and relations, and by ‘the things that are not seen’ he means the realities beyond the stars.

He means the same thing that we mean when we talk in a much less true and impressive contrast about the present and the future. To him the ‘things that are not seen’ are present instead of being, as we weakly and foolishly christen them, ‘the future state.’ And it makes all the difference whether we think of that august realm as lying far away ahead of us, or whether we feel that it is, as it is, in very deed, all round about us, and pressing in upon us, only that ‘the veil’—that is to say, our ‘flesh’—has come between us and it. Do not habitually think of these two sets of objects according to that misleading distinction ‘present’ and ‘future,’ but think of them rather as ‘the things that are seen,’ and ‘the things that are not seen.’

I. Now, first, I wish to say a word or two about what such a look will do for us.

Paul's notion is, as you will see if you look at the context, that if we want to understand the visible, or to get the highest good out of the things that are seen, we must bring into the field of vision ‘the things that are not seen.’ The case with which he is dealing is that of a man in trouble. He talks about light affliction which is but for a moment, working out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ‘while we look at the things which are not seen.’ But the principle on which that statement is made, of course, has its widest application to all sorts and conditions of human life.

And the thought that emerges from it directly is that only when we take the ‘things that are not seen’ into account, and make them the standard and the scale by which we judge all things, do we understand ‘the things that are seen.’ That triumphant paradox of the Apostle's about the heavy burdens that pressed upon him and his brethren, lifelong as these burdens were, which yet he calls ‘light’ and ‘but for a moment’ is possible only when we open the shutter of the dungeon which we fancied was the whole universe, and look out on to the fair land that stretches beyond. A man who has seen the Himalayas will not be much overwhelmed by the height of Helvellyn. They who look out into the eternities have the true measuring rod and standard by which to estimate the duration and

intensity of the things that are present. We are all tempted to do as villagers in some little hamlet do—think that their small local affairs are the world's affairs, and mighty, until they have been up to London and seen the scale of things there. If you and I would let the steady light of Eternity, and the sustaining pressure of the ‘exceeding weight of glory’ pour into our minds, we should carry with us a standard which would bring down the greatness, dwindle the duration, lighten the pressure, of the most crushing sorrow, and would set in its true dimensions everything that is here. It is for want of that that we go on as we do, calculating wrongly what are the great things and what are the small things. When, like some of those prisoners in the Inquisition, the heavy iron weights are laid upon our half-crushed hearts, we are tempted to shriek, ‘Oh, these will be my death!’ instead of taking in that great vision which, as it makes all earthly riches dross, so it makes all crushing burdens and blows of sorrow light as a feather.

But, on the other hand, do not let us forget that this same standard which thus dwindles, also magnifies the small, and in a very solemn sense, makes eternal the else fleeting things of this life. For there is nothing that makes this present existence of ours so utterly contemptible, insignificant, and transitory, as to block out of our sight its connection with Eternity. And there is nothing which so lifts the commonplace into the solemn, and invests with everlasting and

tremendous importance everything that a man does here, as to feel that it all tells on his condition away beyond there. The shafting is on this side of the wall, but the work that it does is through the wall there, in the other chamber; and you do not understand the cranks and the wheels here unless you know that they go through the partition and are doing something there beyond. If you shut out Eternity from our life in time, then it is an inexplicable riddle; and I, for my part, would venture to say that in that case, the men who answer the question, 'Is life worth living?' with a distinct negative, are wise. It is a tale told by an idiot, 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,' unless the light of 'the things not seen' flashes and flares in upon it.

Further, this look of which my text speaks is the condition on which Time prepares for Eternity.

The Apostle is speaking about the effect of affliction in making ready for us an eternal weight of glory, and he says that is done while, or on condition that during the suffering, we are looking steadfastly towards the 'things that are not seen.' But no outward circumstances or events can prepare a weight of glory for us hereafter, unless they prepare us for the glory. Affliction works for us that blessed result, in the measure in which it fits us for that result. And so you will find that, only a verse or two after my text, Paul, using the same very significant and emphatic verb, writes inverting the order of

things, and says 'He that hath wrought *us for* the self-same thing is God.' So that working the thing for us, and working us for the thing, are one and the same process. Or, to put it into plain English, our various duties and circumstances here will prepare the glory of Eternity for us if they prepare us for the glory of Eternity. But only in the measure in which these outward things do thus shape and mould our characters do they work out for us 'an exceeding weight of glory.'

It is often thought that a man has been so miserable here that God is sure to give him future blessedness to recompense him. Well! 'that depends.' If he has used his miserableness as he will use it when he lets the light of 'the things not seen' in upon it, then, certainly, it will work out for him the blessed results. But if he does not, then, as certainly, it will not. Whilst there are many ways by which character is hammered and moulded and shaped into that which is fit to be clothed upon with the glory that is yonder, one of the foremost of these is the passing through things temporal with a continual regard to the things that are eternal. If you want to understand to-day you must bring Eternity into the account, and if you want to use to-day you must use it with the light of the eternal world full upon it. The sum of it all is, brethren, that the things seen cannot be estimated in their true character, unless they are regarded in immediate connection with the things that are unseen; and that the things seen

will only prepare an eternal weight of glory for us when they prepare us for an eternal weight of glory.

II. And so, I note that this look at the things not seen is only possible through Jesus Christ.

He is the only window which opens out and gives the vision of that far-off land. I, for my part, believe that, if I might use such a metaphor, He is the Columbus of the New World. Men believed, and argued, and doubted about the existence of it across the seas there, until a man went, and came back again, and then went to found a new city yonder. And men hoped for immortality, and believed after a fashion—some of them—in a future life, and dreaded that it might be true, and discussed and debated whether it was, but doubt clouded all minds, until One, our Brother, went away into the darkness, and came back again, in most respects as He had gone, and then departed once more to make ready a city in which all who love Him should finally dwell, and to which you and I may be sure that we shall emigrate. It is only in Jesus Christ that the look which my text enjoins is possible.

For not only has He given a certitude so that we need now not to say ‘We think, we hope, we fear, we are pretty well sure, that there must be a life beyond,’ but we can say ‘We know.’ Not only has He done this, but also in Him and His life of glory at God's right hand in heaven, is

summed up all that we really can know about that future. We look into the darkness in vain; we look at Him, and, our knowledge, though limited, is blessed. All other adumbrations of a life beyond must necessarily be cast into the metaphorical forms or the negative symbols in which the New Testament abounds. We may speak of golden pavements, and thrones, and harps, and the like. We may say: 'No night there, no sighing, nor weeping, no burdened hearts, no toil, no pain, for the former things are passed away.' But a future life which is all described in metaphors, and a future life of which we know only that it is the negation of the disagreeables and limitations of the present, is but a poor affair. Here is the positive truth, 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne.' 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' And beyond that nearness to Christ, blessed communion with Christ, likeness to Christ, royalty derived from Christ, I think we neither know nor need to know anything about that life.

Not only is He our sole medium of knowledge and Himself the revelation of our heaven, but it is only by Him that man's thoughts and desires are drawn to, and find themselves at home in, that tremendous thought of immortality. I know not how it may be with you, but I am not ashamed to confess that to me the idea of eternal continuance of my conscious being is an awful thought, rather depressing and bewildering than delighting and attractive. I, for

my part, do not believe that men generally do grapple to their hearts, with any gratitude or joy, that solemn belief of immortal life unless they feel that it is life with, and in, and like, Jesus Christ. 'To depart' is dreary, and it is only when we can say 'and to be with Christ' that it becomes distinctly 'far better.' He is, if I may so say, at once telescope and star. By Him we see Him; we see, seeing Him, that the things that are unseen all cluster round Himself and become blessed.

III. And now, lastly, this look should be habitual with all Christian people.

Paul takes it for granted that every Christian man is, as the habitual direction of his thoughts, looking towards those 'things that are not seen.' The original shows that even more distinctly than our translation, but our translation shows it plainly enough. He does not say 'works for us an exceeding weight of glory *for*,' but *'while'* we look, as if it were a matter of course. He took it for granted as to these Corinthians. I wonder if he would be warranted in taking it for granted about us?

Note what sort of a look it is which produces these blessed effects. The word which the Apostle employs here is a more pointed one than the ordinary one for 'seeing.' It is translated in other places in the New Testament, *'Mark'* them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample, and the like. And it implies a concentrated,

protracted effort and interested gaze. A man, standing on the deck of a ship, casts a languid eye for a moment out on to the horizon, and sees nothing. A keen-eyed sailor by his side shades his eyes with his hand, and shuts out cross-lights, and looks, and peers, and keeps his eyes steady, and he sees the filmy outline of the mountain land. If you look for a minute, not much caring whether you see anything or not, and then turn away, and get your eye dazzled with all those vulgar, crude, high colours round about you here on earth, it is very little that you will see of 'the things that are not seen.' Concentrated attention, and a steadfast look, are wanted to make the invisible visible. You have to alter the focus of your eye if you are to see the thing that is afar off.

There has to be a positive shutting out of all other things, as is emphatically taught in the text by putting first the not looking at 'the things that are seen.' Here they are pressing in upon our eyeballs, all round us, insisting on being looked at, and unless we resolutely avert our eyes, we shall not see anything else. They monopolise us unless we resist the intrusive appeals that they make to us. We are like men down in some fertile valley, surrounded by rich vegetation, but seeing nothing beyond the green sides of the glen. We have to go up to the hill-top if we are to look out over the flashing ocean, and behold afar off the towers of the mother city across the restless waves. Brethren, unless you shut out the world you will never see the things

that are not seen.

Now, as I have said, the Apostle regards this conscious effort at bringing ourselves into touch, in mind and heart and faith, with ‘the things that are not seen’ as being a habitual characteristic of Christian men. I am very much afraid that the present generation of Christian people do not, in anything like the degree in which they should, recreate and strengthen themselves with the contemplation which he here recommends. It seems to me, for instance, that we do not hear nearly as much in pulpits about the life beyond the grave as we used to do when I was a boy. And, though I confess I speak from limited knowledge, it seems to me that these great motives which lie in the thought of Eternity and our place there, are by no means as prominent in the minds of the Christian people of this generation as they used to be. Partly, I suppose, that arises from the wholesome emphasis which has been given of late years to the present day, and this-side-the grave effects of Christianity, upon character and life. Partly it arises, I think, from the half-consciousness of being surrounded by an atmosphere of scepticism and unbelief as to a future life, and from the most unwise, inexpedient, and cowardly yielding to the temptation to say very little about the distinctive features of Christianity, and to dwell rather upon those which are sure to be recognised by even unbelieving people. And it comes, too, from the lack of faith, which, again, it tends mightily to

increase.

Oh, dear brethren! our consciences tell us what different people we should be if habitually there shone before us that great, solemn issue to which we are all tending. Variations in the atmosphere there will always be, and sometimes the distant outlines will be clearer and sharper than at others, and the colours will shine out more distinctly. But surely it should not be that our vision of the Eternal should be like the vision that dwellers amongst the mountains have of the summits. They say that some of the great peaks of the world are swathed in mist all day long, and that only for a few moments in the morning, or for a brief space in the evening, does the solemn summit gleam rosy in the light. And that, I am afraid, is very much like the degree in which most of us look at 'the things that are not seen' and so we are feeble, and we do not understand 'the things that are not seen'; and we do not get the good out of them.

Dear brethren, let us turn away our eyes from the gauds that we can see, and open the eyes of our spirits on the things that are, the things where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Surely, surely, it is madness that when two sets of objects are before us, the one lasting for a moment, and then dying down into black nothingness, and the other shining on for ever; and when our 'look' settles whether we shall share the fate of the one or of the other, we should choose to gaze with all our eyes and

hearts at the perishable and turn away from the permanent. Surely, if it is true that the things which are seen are temporal, common-sense, and a reasonable regard for our own well-being, bid us look at the eternal 'things which are not seen,' since only so can the light and the momentary afflictions, joys, sorrows, or circumstances, work out for us, and work us for 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

TENT AND BUILDING

> 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'—2 COR. v. 1.

Knowledge and ignorance, doubt and certitude, are remarkably blended in these words. The Apostle knows what many men are not certain of; the Apostle doubts as to what all men now are certain of. '*If* our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved'—there is surely no if about that. But we must remember that the first Christians, and the Apostles with them, did not know whether they might not survive till the coming of Christ; and so not die, but 'be changed.' And this possibility, as appears from the context, is clearly before the Apostle's mind.

Such a limitation of his knowledge is in entire accordance with our Lord's own words, ‘It is not for you to know the times and the seasons,’ and does not in the smallest degree derogate from his authority as an inspired teacher. But his certitude is as remarkable as his hesitation. He knows—and he modestly and calmly affirms the confidence, as possessed by all believers—that, in the event of death coming to him or them, he and they have a mansion waiting for their entrance; a body of glory like to that which Jesus already wears.

I. So my text mainly sets before us very strikingly the Christian certitude as to the final future.

I need not dwell, I suppose, upon that familiar metaphor by which the relation of man to his bodily environment is described as that of a man to his dwelling-place. Only I would desire, in a word, to emphasise this as being the first of the elements of the blessed certitude in which Christian people may expatiate—the clear, broad distinction between me and my physical frame. There is no more connection, says Paul, between us and the organisation in which we at present dwell than there is between a man and the house that he inhabits. ‘The foolish senses crown’ Death and call him lord; but the Christian's certitude firmly draws the line, and declares that the man, the whole personality, is undisturbed by anything that befalls his residence; and that he may pass unimpaired

from one house to another, being in both the self-same person. And that is something to keep firm hold of in these days when we are being told that life and consciousness are but a function of organisation, and that if the one be annihilated the other cannot persist. No; though all illustrations and metaphors must necessarily fail, the two which lie side by side here in my text and its context are far truer than that pseudo-science—which is not science at all, but only inference from science—which denies that the man is one thing and his house altogether another.

Then again, note, as part of the elements of this Christian certitude, the blessed thought that a body is part of the perfection of manhood. No mere dim, ghostly future, where consciousness somehow persists, without environment or tools to act upon an outer world, completes the idea of God in reference to man. But the old trinity is the eternal trinity for humanity, body, soul, and spirit. Corporeity, with all that it means of definiteness, with all that it means of relation to an external universe, is the perfection of manhood. To dwell naked, as the Apostle says in the context, is a thing from which man shudderingly recoils; and it is not to be his final fate. Let us take this as no small gain in reference to our conceptions of a future—the emphatic drawing into light of that thought that for his perfection man requires body, soul, and spirit.

And now, if we turn for a moment to the characteristics of the two conditions with which my text deals, we get some familiar enough but yet great and strengthening thoughts. The ‘earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved,’ or, more correctly, retaining the metaphor of the house, is to be pulled down—and in its place there comes a building of God, a ‘house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’

Now the contrast that is drawn here, whilst it would run out into a great many other particulars, about which we know nothing, and therefore had better say nothing, revolves in the Apostle's mind mainly round these two ‘earthly’ as contrasted with ‘in the heavens’; and ‘tabernacle,’ or tent, as contrasted, first of all with a ‘building,’ and then with the predicate ‘eternal.’

That is to say, the first outstanding difference which arises before the Apostle as blessed and glorious, is the contrast between the fragile dwelling-place, with its thin canvas, its bending poles, its certain removal some day, and the permanence of that which is not a ‘tent,’ but a ‘building’ which is ‘eternal.’ Involved in that is the thought that all the limitations and weaknesses which are necessarily associated with the perishableness of the present abode are at an end for ever. No more fatigue, no more working beyond the measure of power, no more need for recuperation and repose; no more dread of sickness and weakness; no more possibility of

decay, 'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption'—neither '*can* they die any more.' Whether that be by reason of any inherent immortality, or by reason of the uninterrupted flow into the creature of the immortal life of Christ, to whom he is joined, is a question that need not trouble us now. Enough for us that the contrast between the Bedouin tent—which is folded up and carried away, and nothing left but the black circle where the cheerful hearth once glinted amidst the sands of the desert—and the stately mansion reared for eternity, is the contrast between the organ of the spirit in which we now dwell and that which shall be ours.

And the other contrast is no less glorious and wonderful. 'The *earthly* house of this tent' does not merely define the composition, but also the whole relations and capacities of that to which it refers. The 'tent' is 'earthly', not merely because, to use a kindred metaphor, it is a 'building of clay,' but because, by all its capacities, it belongs to, corresponds with, and is fitted only for, this lower order of things, the seen and the perishable. And, on the other hand, the 'mansion' is in 'the heavens,' even whilst the future tenant is a nomad in his tent. That is so, because the power which can create that future abode is 'in the heavens.' It is so called in order to express the security in which it is kept for those who shall one day enter upon it. And it is so, further, to express the order of things with which it brings its dwellers into contact. 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God;

neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' That future home of the spirit will be congruous with the region in which it dwells; fitted for the heavens in which it is now preserved. And thus the two contrasts—adapted to the perishable, and itself perishable, belonging to the eternal and itself incorruptible—are the two which loom largest before the Apostle's mind.

Let no man say that such ideas of a possible future bodily frame are altogether inconsistent with all that we know of the limitations and characteristics of what we call matter. 'There is one flesh of beasts and another of birds,' says Paul; 'there is one glory of the sun and another of the moon.' And his old-fashioned argument is perfectly sound to-day.

Do you know so fully all the possibilities of creation as that you are warranted in asserting that such a thing as a body which is the fit organ of the spirit, and is incorruptible like the heavens in which it dwells, is an impossibility? Surely the forms of matter are sufficiently varied to make us chary in asserting that other forms are impossible, to which there may belong, as characteristics, even these glorious ones of my text. The old story of the king in the tropics, who laughed to scorn some one who told him that water could be turned into a solid, may well be quoted in this connection. Let us be less confident that we know all that is to be known in regard to the sweep of God's creative power; and let us thankfully accept the teaching by

which we, too, in all our ignorance, may be able to say, 'We know that ... we have a building of God ... eternal in the heavens.'

Now there is only one more remark that I wish to make about this part of my subject; and it is this, that the teaching of my text and its context casts great light—and I think by many people much-needed light—on what the resurrection of the dead means. That doctrine has been weighted with a great many incredibilities and I venture to say absurdities, by well-meaning misconceptions and exaggerations. We have heard grand platitudes about 'the scattered dust being gathered from the four winds of heaven,' and so on, but the teaching of my text is that the contrast between the present physical frame and the future bodily environment is utter and complete; and that resurrection does not mean the assuming again of the body that is left behind and done with, but the reinvestiture of the man with another body. And so the Scriptural phrase is, not 'the resurrection of the body,' but 'the resurrection of the dead.' It is a house 'in the heavens.' It comes 'from heaven.'

We leave the tent. Life and thought

> ... have gone away, side by side,
> Leaving doors and windows wide;
> Careless tenants they!

And they may well be careless, because in the heavens they have another mansion,

incorruptible and glorious.

We leave the ‘tent’; we enter the ‘building.’ There is nothing here of some germ of immortality being somehow extricated from the ruins, and fostered into glorious growth. Or, to take another metaphor of the context, we strip off the garment and are naked; and then we are clothed with another garment and are not found naked. The resurrection of the dead is the clothing of the spirit with the house which is from heaven. And there is as much difference between the two habitations as there is between the grim, solid architecture of northern peoples, amidst snow and ice, needed to resist the blasts, and to keep the life within in an ungenial climate, and the light, graceful dwellings of those who walk in an atmosphere of perpetual sunshine in the tropics, as there is between the close-knit and narrow-windowed and narrow-doored abode in which we now have to pass our days, and that large house, with broad windows that take in a mightier sweep and new senses that have relation with new qualities in the world then around us. Therefore let us, whilst we grope in the dark here, and live in a narrow hovel in a back street, look forward to the time when we shall dwell on the sunny heights in the great pavilion which God prepares for them that love Him.

II. And now note, again, how we come to this certitude.

My text is very significantly followed by a 'for,' which gives the reason of the knowledge in a very remarkable manner. 'We know, ... for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.' Now that singular collocation of ideas may be set forth thus—whatever longing there is in a Christian, God-inspired soul, that longing is a prophecy of its own fulfilment. We know that there is a house, because of the yearning, which is deepest and strongest when we are nearest God, and likest what He would have us to be—the yearning to be 'clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' That is a truth that goes a long way; though to enlarge on it is irrelevant to our present purpose. It has its limitations, as is obvious from the context, in which are human elements which are not destined to be gratified, mingled with the yearning, which is of God, and which is destined to be satisfied. But this at least we may firmly hold by, that just because God will not put men to confusion intellectually, and does not let them entertain uncherished—still less Himself foster and excite—longings which He does not mean to gratify, a Christian yearning for immortality is, to the man who feels it, a declaration that immortality is sure for him. 'Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.' Whatsoever, in touching Him, we do deeply long for may have blended with it human elements, which will be dispersed unsatisfied, but the substance of it is a prophecy of its own fulfilment. And as

surely as the stork in the heavens, flying southward, will reach the sunny lands which draw it from the grim northern winter, so surely may a man say, ‘I know that I have a house in heaven, because I long for it, and shrink from being found naked.’

Of course such longing, such aspiration and revulsion are no proofs of a fact except there be some fact which changes them, from mere vague desires, and makes these solid certainties. And such a fact we have in that which is the only proof that the world has received, of the persistence of life through death and the continuance of personal identity unchanged by the grave, and that is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our faith in immortality does not depend merely on our own subjective desires and longings, but these desires and longings are quickened, confirmed, and certified by this great fact that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead; and therefore we know that the yearnings in us are not in vain. So we come to this certitude, first, by reason of his experience; and, second, by reason of the longings which that experience fosters if it does not kindle, within our hearts.

And let no man take exception to the Apostle's word here, ‘we know,’ or tell us that ‘Knowledge is of the things we see.’ That is true, and not true. It is true in regard to what arrogates to itself the name of science. And we are willing to admit the limitation if the men who insist upon

it will, on their sides, admit that there are other sources of certitude than so-called 'facts,' by which they mean merely material facts. If it is meant to assert that we are less sure of the love of God, of immortality, than we are of the existence of this piece of wood, or that flame of gas; then I humbly venture to say that there is another region of facts than those which are appreciable by sense; that the evidence upon which we rest our certitude of immortal blessedness is quite as valid, quite as true, quite as able to bear the weight of a leaning heart as anything that can be produced, in the nature of evidence, for the things round us. It is not, 'We fancy, we believe, we hope, we are pretty nearly sure,' but it is 'We *know* ... that we have a building of God.'

III. Lastly, note what this certitude does.

The Apostle tells us by the 'for' which lies at the beginning of my text, and makes it a reason for something that has preceded, and what has preceded is this, 'We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.'

That is to say, such a joyous, calm certitude draws men's thoughts away from this shabby and transitory present, and fixes them on the solemn majesties of that eternal future. Yes! and nothing else will. Take away the idea of resurrection, and the remaining idea of immortality is a poor, shadowy, impotent thing.

There is no force in it; there is no blessedness in it; there is nothing in it for a man to lay hold of. And, as a matter of fact, there is no vivid faith in a future life without belief in the resurrection and bodily existence of the perfected dead.

And we shall not let our thoughts willingly go out thither unless our own personal wellbeing there is very sure to us. When we know that for us individually there is that house waiting for us to enter into it, when the Lord comes, then we shall not be unwilling to turn our hearts and our desires thither. We look at the things which are not seen, for we know that we have a house eternal.

And such a certitude will also make a man willing to accept the else unwelcome necessity of leaving the tent, and for a while doing without the mansion. It is that which the Apostle is speaking of in subsequent verses, on which I cannot enter now. He says—and therein speaks a universal experience—that men recoil from the idea of having to lay aside this earthly body and be 'naked.' But we know that we have that glorious mansion waiting for us, and that till the day comes when we enter upon it we may be lapt in Christ instead, and, in that so-called intermediate state, may have Him to surround us, Him to be to us the medium by which we come into connection with anything external, and so can contentedly go away from our home in the body; and go to our home in Christ. 'Wherefore, we are always confident, and willing

rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord.'

Oh, brethren! do we think of our future thus? If we do, then let us lay to heart the final words of our teacher in this part of his letter: 'Wherefore we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto Him.'

THE PATIENT WORKMAN

> 'Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.'—2 COR. v. 5.

These words penetrate deep into the secrets of God. They assume to have read the riddle of life. To Paul everything which we experience, outwardly or inwardly, is from the divine working. Life is to him no mere blind whirl, or unintelligent play of accidental forces, nor is it the unguided result of our own or of others' wills, but is the slow operation of the great Workman. Paul assumes to know the meaning of this protracted process, that it all has one design which we may know and grasp and further. And he believes that the clear perception of the divine purpose, and the habit of looking at everything as contributing thereto, will be a magic charm against all sorrow, doubt, despondency, or fear, for he adds, 'Therefore we are always confident.' So let us try to follow the

course of thought which issues in such a blessed gift as that of a continual, courageous outlook, and buoyant though grave lightheartedness, because we discern what He means 'Who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will.'

I. The first thought here is, God's purpose in all His working; 'He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.'

What is that 'self-same thing'? To understand it we must look back for a moment to the previous context. The Apostle has been speaking about the instinctive reluctance which even good men feel at prospect of dying and 'putting off the earthly house of this tabernacle.' He distinguishes between three different conditions in which the human spirit may be—dwelling in the earthly body, stripped of that, and 'clothed with the house which is from Heaven,' and to this last and highest state he sees that for him and for his brethren there were two possible roads. They might reach it either through losing the present body, in the act of death, and passing through a period of what he calls nakedness; or they might attain it by being 'superinvested,' as it were, with the glorious body which was to come to saints with Christ when He came; and so slip on, as it were, the wedding garment over their old clothes, without having to denude themselves of these. And he says that deep in the Christian heart there lay reluctance to take the former road and the

preference for the latter. His longing was that that which is mortal might be ‘swallowed up of life,’ as some sand-bank in the tide-way may be gradually covered and absorbed by the rejoicing waters. And then he says, ‘Now He that hath wrought us for this very thing, is God.’

Of course it is impossible that he can mean by this ‘very thing’ the second of the roads by which it was possible to reach the ultimate issue, because he did not know whether his brethren and he were to die or to be changed. He speaks in the context about death as a possible contingency for himself and for them,—‘*If* our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,’ and so on. Therefore we must suppose that ‘the self-same thing’ of which he is thinking as the divine purpose in all His dealings with us, is not the manner in which we may attain that ultimate condition, but the condition itself which, by one road or another, God's children shall attain. Or, in other words, the highest aim of the divine love in all its dealings with us Christian men, is not merely a blessed spiritual life, but the completion of our humanity in a perfect spirit dwelling in a glorified body. Corporeity—the dwelling in a body by which the pure spirit moves amidst pure universes—is the highest end of God's will concerning us.

That glorified body is described in our context in wonderful words, which it would take me far too long to do more than just touch upon. Here we dwell in a tent, there we shall dwell in a

building. Here in a house made with hands, a corporeal frame derived from parents by material transmission and intervention; there we shall dwell in a building of which God is the maker. Here we dwell in a crumbling clay tenement, which rains dissolve, which lightning strikes, and winds overthrow, and which finally lies on the ground a heap of tumbled ruin. There we dwell in a building, God's direct work, eternal, and knowing no corruption nor change. Here we dwell in a body congruous with, and part of, the perishable earthly world in which it abides, and with which it stands in relation; there we dwell in a house partaking of the nature of the heavens in which it moves, a body that is the fit organ of a perfect spirit.

And so, says Paul, the end of what God means with us is not stated in all its wonderfulness, when we speak of spirits imbued with His wisdom and surcharged with His light and perfectness, but when we add to that the thought of a fitting organ in which these spirits dwell, whereby they can come into contact with an external universe, incorruptible, and so reach the summit of their destined completeness. ‘The house not made with hands,’ eternal, the building of God in the Heavens, is the end that God has in view for all His children.

II. So, then, secondly, note the slow process of the Divine Workman.

The Apostle employs here a very emphatic

compound term for ‘hath wrought.’ It conveys not only the idea of operation, but the idea of continuous and somewhat toilsome and effortful work, as if against the resistance of something that did not yield itself naturally to the impulse that He would bestow. Like some sculptor with a hard bit of marble, or some metallurgist who has to work the rough ore till it becomes tractable, so the loving, patient, Divine Artificer is here represented as labouring long and earnestly with a somewhat obstinate material which can and does resist His loving touch, and yet going on with imperturbable and patient hope, by manifold touches, here a little and there a little, all through life preparing a man for His purpose. The great Artificer toils at His task, ‘rising early’ and working long, and not discouraged when He comes upon a black vein in the white marble, nor when the hard stone turns the edge of His chisels.

Now I would have you notice that there lies in this conception a very important thought, viz. God cannot make you fit for heaven all at a jump, or by a simple act of will. That is not His way of working. He can make a world so, He cannot make a saint so. He can speak and it is done when it is only a universe that has to be brought into being; or He can say, ‘Let there be light,’ and light springs at His word. But He cannot say, and He does not say, Let there be holiness, and it comes. Not so can God make man meet for the ‘inheritance of the saints in light.’ And it takes Him all His energies, for all a

lifetime, to prepare His child for what He wants to make of him.

There is another thought here, which I can only touch, and that is that God cannot give a man that glorified body of which I have been speaking, unless the man's spirit is Christlike. He cannot raise a bad man at the resurrection with the body of His glory. By the necessities of the case it is confined to the purified, because it corresponds to their inward spiritual being. It is only a perfect spirit that can dwell in a perfect body. You could not put a bad man, Godless and Christless, into the body which will be fit for them whom Christ has changed first of all in heart and spirit into His own likeness. He would be like those hermit crabs that you see on the beach who run into any kind of a shell, whether it fits them or not, in order to get a house.

There are two principles at work in the resurrection of the dead. The glorified body is not the physical outcome of the material body here, but is the issue and manifestation, in visible form, of the perfect and Christlike spirit. Some shall rise to glory and immortality, some to shame and everlasting contempt. If we are to stand at the last with the body of our humiliation changed into a body of glory, we must begin by being changed in the spirit of our mind. As the mind is, so will the body be one day. But, passing from such thoughts as these, and remembering that the Apostle here is speaking only about Christian people, and the

divine operations upon them, we may still extend the meaning of this significant word ‘wrought’ somewhat further, and ask you just to consider, and that very briefly, the three-fold processes which, in the divine working, terminate in, and contemplate, this great issue.

God has wrought us for it in the very act of making us what we are. Human nature is an insoluble enigma, if this world is its only field. Amidst all the waste, the mysterious waste, of creation, there is no more profligate expenditure of powers than that which is involved in giving a man such faculties and capacities, if this be the only field on which they are to be exercised. If you think of what most of us do in this world, and of what it is in us to be, and to do, it is almost ludicrous to consider the disproportion. All other creatures fit their circumstances; nothing in them is bigger than their environment. They find in life a field for every power. You and I do not. ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have roosting-places.’ They all correspond to their circumstances, but we have an infinitude of faculty lying half dormant in each of us, which finds no work at all in this present world. And so, looking at men as they are with eternity in their hearts, with natures that go reaching out towards infinity, the question comes up: ‘Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain? What is the use of us, and why should we be what we are, if there is nothing for us except this poor present?’ God, or whoever made us, has made a mistake; and

strangely enough, if we were not made, but evolved, evolution has worked out faculties which have no correspondence with the things around them.

Life and man are an insoluble enigma except on one hypothesis, and that is that this is a nursery-ground, and that the plants will be pricked out some day, and planted where they are meant to grow. The hearts that feel after absolute and perfect love, the spirits that can conceive the idea of an infinite goodness, the dumb desires, the blank misgivings that wander homeless amidst the narrowness of this poor earth, all these things proclaim that there is a region where they will find their nutriment and expatiate, and when we look at a man we can only say, He that hath wrought him for an infinite world, and an endless communion with a perfect good, is God.

Still further, another field of the divine operation to this end is in what we roughly call ‘providences.’ What is the meaning of all this discipline through which we are passed, if there is nothing to be disciplined for? What is the good of an apprenticeship if there is no journeyman's life to come after it, where the powers that have been slowly acquired shall be nobly exercised upon broader fields? Why should men be taken, as it were, and, like the rough iron from the ground,

'Be heated hot with hopes and fears,

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And plunged in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom,'
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if, after all the process, the polished shaft is to be broken in two, and tossed away as rubbish? If death ends faculty, it is a pity that the faculty was so patiently developed. If God is educating us all in His school, and then means that, like some wastrel boys, we should lose all our education as soon as we leave its benches, there is little use in the rod, and little meaning in the training. Brethren! life is an insoluble riddle unless the purpose of it lie yonder, and unless all this patient training of our sorrows and our gladnesses, the warmth that expands and the cold that contracts the heart, the light that gladdens and the darkness that saddens the eye and the spirit, are equally meant for training us for the perfect life of a perfect soul moving a perfect body in a perfect universe. Here is a pillar in some ancient hall that has fallen into poor hands, and has had a low roof thrown across the centre of the chamber at half its height. In the lower half there is part of a pillar that means nothing; ugly, bare, evidently climbing, and passing through the aperture, and away above yonder is the carved capital and the great entablature that it carries. Who could understand the shaft unless he could look up through the aperture, and see the summit? And who can think of life as anything but a wretched fragment unless he knows that all which begins here runs upwards into the room above, and there finds its explanation and its completion?

But there is the third sphere of the divine operation. As in creation and in providence, so in all the work and mystery of our redemption, this is the goal that God has in view. It was not worth Christ's while to come and die, if nothing more was to come of it than the imperfect reception of His blessings and gifts which the noblest Christian life in this world presents. The meaning and purpose of the Cross, the meaning and purpose of all the patient dealings of His whispering Spirit, are that we shall be like our Divine Lord in spirit first, and in body afterwards.

And everything about the experiences of a true Christian spirit is charged with a prophecy of immortality. I have not time to dwell upon one point gathered from the context, that I intended to have insisted upon, viz. that the very desires which God's good Spirit works in a believing soul are themselves confirmations of their own fulfilment. But if you notice at your leisure the verses that precede my text, you will find that the Apostle adduces the groanings of 'earnest desire to be clothed with our house which is from Heaven,' as a proof that we *have* 'a building of God, a house not made with hands.' That is to say, every longing in a Christian heart when it is most filled with that Spirit, and most in contact with God, and which is the answer of that heart to a promise of Christ —every such longing carries with it the assurance of its own fulfilment. He that hath wrought it has wrought it in order that the

desire may fit us for its answer, and that the open mouth may be ready for the abundant filling which His grace designs. He works upon us, therefore, by making us desire a gift, and then He gives that which He desires. So let us cherish these longings, not for the accident of escaping death, nor as choosing the path by which we shall reach the blessed issue, but longing for that great issue itself; and try to keep more distinct and clear before all our minds this thought, 'God means for me the participation in Christ's glorified Manhood, and my attaining of that Manhood is the end that He has in view in all that He does with me.'

III. So I must say one word about the last thought that is here, and that is the certainty and the confidence. 'Therefore we are always confident,' says the Apostle.

'He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.' Then we may be sure that as far as He is concerned, the work will not be suspended nor vain. *This* man does not begin to build and is unable to finish. This workman has infinite resources, an unchanging purpose, and infinite long-suffering. He will complete His task.

In the quarries of Egypt you will find gigantic stones, half-dressed, and intended to have been transported to some great temple. But there they lie, the work incomplete, and they never carried to their place. There are no half-polished stones in God's quarries. They are all finished where

they lie, and then borne across the sea, like Hiram's from Lebanon, to the Temple on the hill. It is a certainty that God will finish His work; and since ‘He that hath wrought us is God,’ we may be sure that He will not stop till He has done.

But it is a certainty that you can thwart. It is an operation that you can counterwork. The potter in Jeremiah's parable was making a vessel upon his wheel, and the vessel was marred in his hand, and did not turn out what he wanted it. The meaning of the metaphor, which has often been twisted to express the very opposite, is that the potter's work may fail, that the artificer may be balked, that you can counterwork the divine dealing, and that all His purpose in your creation, in His providence and in His gift of His Son for your redemption, may come to nought as far as you are concerned. ‘I beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.’ ‘In vain have I smitten your children,’ wailed the Divine Love; ‘they have received no correction.’ In vain God lavishes upon some of us His mercies, in vain for some of us has Christ toiled and suffered and died. Oh, brother! do not let all God's work on you come to nought, but yield yourselves to it. Rejoice in the confidence that He is moulding your character, cheerfully welcome and accept the providences, painful as they may be, by which He prepares you for heaven. The chisel is sharp that strikes off the superfluous pieces of marble, and when the chisel cuts, not into marble, but into a heart, there is a pang. Bear it,

bear it! and understand the meaning of the blow of the sculptor's mallet, and see in all life the divine hand working towards the accomplishment of His own loving purpose. Then if we turn to Him, amid the pains of His discipline and the joys of His gifts of grace, with recognition and acceptance of His meaning in them all, and cry to Him, 'Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forsake not the work of Thine own hands,' we may be always confident, as knowing that 'the Lord will perfect that which concerneth us.'

THE OLD HOUSE AND THE NEW

> 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.'—2 COR. v. 8.

There lie in the words of my text simply these two things; the Christian view of what death is, and the Christian temper in which to anticipate it.

I. First, the Christian view of what death is.

Now it is to be observed that, properly speaking, the Apostle is not here referring to the state of the dead, but to the act of dying. The language would more literally and accurately be rendered 'willing to *go from* home, from the

body, and to *go* home, to the Lord.' The moment of transition of course leads to a permanent state, but it is the moment of transition which is in view in the words. I need not remind you, I suppose, that the metaphor of the home is one which has already been dwelt upon in the early part of the chapter, where the contrast is drawn between the transitory house of 'this tent,' and the 'building of God,' the body of incorruption and glory which the saints at the Resurrection day shall receive. So, then, the Christian view of the act of death is that it is simply a change of abode.

Very clearly and firmly does Paul draw the line between the man and his dwelling-place. Life is more than a result of organisation. Consciousness, thought, feeling, are more than functions of matter. No materialist philosopher has ever been, or ever will be, able to explain within the limits of his system the strange difference between the cause and the effect; how it comes to pass that at the one end of the chain there is an impression upon a nerve, and at the other there is pain; how at the one end there is the throb of an inch of matter in a man's skull, and at the other end there are thoughts that breathe and words that burn, and that live for ever. That brings us up to the edge of a gulf over which no materialist philosopher has ever been able to cast a bridge. The scalpel cannot cut deep enough to solve this mystery. Conscience as well as instinct cry out against the theory that the worker and the tools are inseparable. For

such a theory reduces human actions to mechanical results, and shatters all responsibility. Man is more than his dwelling-place. You crush a shell on the beach with your heel, and you slay its tiny inhabitant. But you can pull down the tent, and pluck up its pegs, and roll up its canvas, and put it away in a dark corner, and the tenant is untouched. The foolish senses crown Death as last, and lord of all. But wisdom says, 'Life and thought have gone away side by side, leaving doors and windows wide,' and that is all that has happened.

Still further, my text suggests that to the Christian soul the departure from the one house is the entrance into the other. The home has been the body; the home is now to be Jesus Christ. And very beautiful and significant with meanings, which only experience will fully unfold, is the representation that the Lord Christ Himself assumes the place which the bodily environment has hitherto held.

That teaches us, at all events, that there is a new depth and closeness of union with Jesus waiting the Christian soul, when it lays aside the separating film of flesh. Here the bodily organisation, with its limitations, necessarily shuts us off from the closeness of intercourse which is possible for a naked soul. We know not how much separation may depend upon the immersing of the spirit in the fleshly tabernacle, but this we know, that, though here and now, by faith which dominates sense, souls can live in

Christ even whilst they live in the body; yet there shall come a form of union so much more close, intimate, all-pervading, and all-encircling, as that the present union with Him by faith, precious as it is, shall be, as the Apostle calls it in our context, 'absence from the Lord.' 'We have to be discharged,' says an old thinker, 'of a great deal of what we call body, and then we shall be more truly ourselves,' and more truly united to Him who, if we are Christian people at all, is the self of ourselves and the life of our lives. No man knows how close he can nestle to the bosom of Christ when the film of flesh is rent away. Just as when in some crowded street of a great city some grimy building is pulled down, a sudden daylight fills the vacant space, and all the site that had been shut out from the sky for many years is drenched in sunshine, so when 'the earthly house of this tabernacle' is ruinated and falls, the light will flood the place where it stood, and to be 'absent from the body' shall be to be 'present with the Lord.'

May we go a step further and suggest that, perhaps, in the bold metaphor of my text, there is an answer to the questions which so often rack loving and parted hearts? 'Do the dead know aught of what affects us here? and can they do aught but gaze on Him, and love, and rest?' If it be that there is any such analogy as seems to be dimly shadowed in my text, between the relation of the body on earth to the spirit that inhabits it, and that of Jesus Christ to him who dwells in Him, and is clothed by Him, then

it may be that, as the flesh, so the Christ transmits to the spirit that has Him for its home impressions from the outside world, and affords a means of action upon that world. Christ may be, if I might so say, the sensorium of the disembodied spirit; and Christ may be the hand of the man who hath no other instrument by which to express himself. But all that is fancy perhaps, speculation certainly; and yet there seems to be a shadow of a foundation for at least entertaining the possibility of such a thought as that Jesus is the means of knowing and the means of acting to those who rest from their labours in Him, and dwell in peace in His arms. But be that as it may, the reality of a close communion and encircling by the felt presence of Jesus Christ, which, in its blessed closeness, will make the closest communion here seem to be obscure, is certainly declared in the words before us.

Then this transition is regarded in my text as being the work of a moment. It is not a long journey of which the beginning is 'to go *from* home, from the body,' and the end is 'to *go* home, to the Lord.' But it is one and the same motion which, looked at from the one side, is departure, and looked at from the other is arrival. The old saying has it, 'there is but a step between me and death.' The truth is, there is but a step between me and *life*. The mighty angel in the Apocalypse, that stood with one foot on the firm land and the other on the boundless ocean, is but the type of the spirit in the brief moment

of transition, when the consciousness of two worlds blends, and it is clothed upon with the house which is from heaven, in the very act of stripping off the earthly house of this tabernacle.

Nor need I remind you, I suppose, in more than a sentence, that this transition obviously leads into a state of conscious communion with Jesus Christ. The dreary figment of an unconscious interval for the disembodied spirit has no foundation, either in what we know of spirit, or in what is revealed to us in Scripture. For the one thing that seems to make it probable —the use of that metaphor of 'sleeping in Jesus'—is quite sufficiently accounted for by the notions of repose, and cessation of outward activity, and withdrawal of capacity of being influenced by the so-called realities of this lower world, without dragging in the unfounded notion of unconsciousness. My text is incompatible with it, for it is absurd to say of an unconscious spirit, clear of a bodily environment, that it is anywhere; and there is no intelligible sense in which the condition of such a spirit can be called being 'with the Lord.'

So, then, I think a momentary transition, with uninterrupted consciousness, which leads to a far deeper and more wonderful and blessed sense of unity with Jesus Christ than is possible here on earth, is the true shape in which the act of death presents itself to the Christian thinker.

And remember, dear brethren, that is all we

know. Nothing else is certain—nothing but this, 'with the Lord,' and the resulting certainty that therefore it is well with them. It is enough for our faith, for our comfort, for our patient waiting. They live in Christ, 'and there we find them worthier to be loved,' and certainly lapped in a deeper rest. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.'

II. In the next place, note the Christian temper in which to anticipate the transition.

'We are always courageous, and willing rather to leave our home in the body, and to go home to the Lord.' Now I must briefly remind you of how the Apostle comes to this state of feeling. He has been speaking about the natural shrinking, which belongs to all humanity, from the act of dissolution, considered as being the stripping off of the garment of the flesh. And he has declared, on behalf of himself and the early Christian Church, his own and their personal desire that they might escape from that trial by the path which seemed possible to the early Christians—viz. that of surviving until the return of Jesus Christ from Heaven, when they would be 'clothed upon with the house which is from Heaven,' without the necessity of stripping off that with which at present they are invested. Then he says—and this is a very remarkable thought—that just because this instinctive shrinking from death and yearning for the glorified body is so strong in the Christian heart, that is a sign that there is such a glorified body

waiting for us. He says, 'we know that if our house ... were dissolved, we have a building of God.' And his reason for knowing it is this, '*for* in this we groan.' That is a bold position to say that a yearning in the Christian consciousness prophesies its own fulfilment. Our desires are the prophecies of His gifts. Then, on this certainty—which he deduces from the fact of the longing for it—on this certainty of the glorious, ultimate body of the Resurrection he bases his willingness expressed in the text, to go through the unwelcome process of leaving the old house, although he shrinks from it.

So, then, Christian faith does not destroy the natural reluctance to put aside the old companion of our lives. The old house, though it be smoky, dimly lighted, and, by our own careless keeping, sluttish and grimy in many a corner, yet is the only house we have ever known, and to be absent from it is untried and strange. There is nothing wrong in saying 'we would not be unclothed but clothed upon.' Nature speaks there. We may reverently entertain the same feelings which our Pattern acknowledged, when He said, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.' And there would be nothing sinful in repeating His prayer with His conditions, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.'

But then the text suggests to us the large Christian possessions and hope which

counterwork this reluctance, in the measure in which we live lives of faith. There is the assurance of that ultimate home in which all the transiency of the present material organisation is exchanged for the enduring permanence which knows no corruption. The ‘tent’ is swept away to make room for the ‘building.’ The earthly house is dissolved in order that there may be reared round the homeless tenant the house eternal, ‘not made with hands,’ God's own work, which is waiting in the heavens; because the power that shall frame it is there. Not only that great hope of the ‘body of His glory,’ with which at the last all true souls shall be invested, but furthermore, ‘the earnest of the spirit,’ and the blessed experiences therefrom, resulting even here, ought to make the unwelcome necessity less unwelcome. If the firstfruits be righteousness and peace and joy of the Holy Ghost, what shall the harvest be? If the ‘earnest,’ the shilling given in advance, be so precious, what will the whole wealth of the inheritance which it heralds be when it is received?

For such reasons the transitory passage becomes less painful and unwelcome. Who is there that would hesitate to dip his foot into the ice-cold brook if he knew that it would not reach above his ankles, and that a step would land him in blessedness unimagined till experienced?

Therefore the Christian temper is that of quiet willingness and constant courage. There is nothing hysterical here, nothing morbid, nothing

overstrained, nothing artificial. The Apostle says: 'I would rather not. I should like if I could escape it. It is an unwelcome necessity; but when I see what I do see beyond,' I am ready. Since so it must be, I will go, not reluctantly, nor dragged away from life, nor clinging desperately to it as it slips from my hands, nor dreading anything that may happen beyond; but always courageous, and prepared to go whithersoever the path may take me, since I am sure that it ends in His bosom. He is willing to go from the home of the body, because to do that is to go home to Christ.

There are other references of our Apostle's, substantially of the same tone as that of my text, but with very beautiful and encouraging differences. When he was nearer his end, when it seemed to him as if the headsman's block was not very far off, his *willingness* had intensified into 'having a *desire* to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.' And when the end was all but reached, and he knew that death was waiting just round the next turn in the road, he said, with the confidence that in the midst of the struggle would have been vainglory, but at the end of it was a foretaste of the calm of Heaven, 'I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' That is our model, dear brethren, —'always courageous,' afraid of nothing in life, in death, or beyond, and therefore willing to go from home from the body and to go home to the Lord.

Think of this man thus fronting the inevitable, with no excitement and with no delusions. Remember what Paul believed about death, about sin, about his own sin, about judgment, about hell. And then think of how to him death had made its darkness beautiful with the light of Christ's face, and all the terror was gone out of it. Do you think so about death? Do you shrink from it? Why? Why do you not take Paul's cure for the shrinking? If you can say, ‘To me to live is Christ,’ you will have no difficulty in saying, ‘and to die is gain.’ That is the only way by which you can come to such a temper, and then you will be willing to move from the cottage to the palace, and to wait in peace till you are shifted again into ‘the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’

PLEASING CHRIST

> ‘We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him.’—2 COR. v. 2.

We do not usually care very much for, or very much trust, a man's own statement of the motives of his life, especially if in the statement he takes credit for lofty and noble ones. And it would be rather a dangerous experiment for the ordinary run of so-called Christian people to stand up and say what Paul says here, that the supreme design and aim towards which all their

lives are directed is to please Jesus Christ. In his case the tree was known by its fruits. Certainly there never was a life of more noble self-abnegation, of more continuous heroism, of loftier aspiration and lowlier service than the life of which we see the very pulse in these words.

But Paul is not only professing his own faith, he is speaking in the name of all his brethren. 'We,' ought to include every man and woman who calls himself or herself a Christian. It is this setting of the will of Jesus Christ high up above all other commandments, and proposing to one's self as the aim that swallows up all other aims, that I may please Him—it is this, and not creeds, forms, opinions, professions, or even a faith that simply trusts in Him for salvation, that makes a true Christian. You are a Christian in the precise measure in which Christ's will is uppermost and exclusive in your life, and for all your professions and your orthodoxy and your worship and your faith, not one hair's-breadth further. Here is the signature and the common characteristic of all real Christians, 'We labour that whether present or absent we may be well-pleasing to Him.'

So then in looking together at these words now, I take three points, the supreme aim of the Christian life; the concentration of effort which that aim demands; and the insignificance to which it reduces all external things.

I. First, then, let me deal with that supreme

aim of the Christian life.

The word which is, correctly enough, rendered ‘accepted,’ may more literally, and perhaps with a closer correspondence to the Apostle's meaning, be translated ‘well-pleasing,’ and the aim is this, not merely that we may be accepted, but that we may bring a smile into His face, and some joy and complacent delight in us into His heart, when He looks upon our doings. That pleasure of Jesus Christ in them that ‘fear Him, and in them that hope in His mercy’ and do His will is a present emotion that fills His heart in looking upon His followers, and it will be especially declared in the solemn, final judgment. We must keep in view both of these periods, if we would rightly understand the sweep of the aim which ought to be uppermost in all Christian people. Here and now in our present acts, we should so live as to occasion a present sentiment of complacent delight in us, in the heart of the Christ who sees us here and now and always. We should so live as that at that far-off future day when we shall ‘all be manifested before the Judgment-seat of Christ,’ the Judge may bend from His tribunal, and welcome us into His presence with a word of congratulation and an outstretched hand of loving reception. Set that two-fold aim before you, Christian men and women, else you will fail to experience the full stimulus of this thought.

Now such an aim as this implies a very wonderful conception of Jesus Christ's present

relations to us. It is a truth that we may minister to His joy. It is a truth that just as really as you mothers are glad when you hear from a far-off land that your boy is doing well, and getting on, so Jesus Christ's heart fills with gladness when He sees you and me walking in the paths in which He would have us go. We often think about our dear dead that they cannot know of us and our doings here, because the sorrow that would sometimes come from the contemplation of our evil, or of our misfortunes, would trouble them in their serene rest. We know not how that may be, but this at least we do know, that the Man Jesus Christ, who, like those dear ones, 'was dead, and is alive for evermore,' in His human nature has knowledge of all His children's failures, as well as successes, and is affected with some shadow of regret, or with some reality of delight, according as they follow or stray from the paths in which He would have them walk. If it be so with Him it may be so with them; and though it be not so with them it must be so with Him. So this strange, sweet, tender, and powerful thought is a piece of plain prose, that Christ is glad when you and I are good.

Does it need any word to emphasise the force of that motive to a Christian heart that loves the Master? Surely this is the great and blessed peculiarity of all the morality of Christianity that it has all a personal bearing and aspect, and that just as the sum of all our duty is gathered up in the one command, 'Imitate Christ,' so the motive

for all our duty lies in ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments,’ and the reward which ought to stimulate more than anything besides is the one thought, not, of what I shall get because I am good, but of what I shall give Him by my obedience, a joy in the heart that was stabbed through and through by sorrow for my sake. That we may please Him ‘who pleased not Himself,’ is surely the grandest motive on which the pursuit of holiness, and the imitation of Jesus Christ can ever be made to rest. Oh! how different, and how much more blessed such a motive and aim is than all the lower reasons for which men are sometimes exhorted and encouraged to be good! What a difference it is when we say, ‘Do that thing because it is right,’ and when we say, ‘Do that thing because you will be happier if you do,’ or when we say, ‘Do it because He would like you to do it.’ The one is all cold and abstract. To stand before a man and simply say: ‘Now go and do your duty,’ is a poor way of setting his feet upon a rock and establishing his goings. Duty is not a word that stirs men's hearts, however it may awe their consciences. It rises up before us like some goddess statuesque and serene, with purity, indeed, in her deep and solemn eyes, but with nothing appealing to our affections in her stern lineaments. But when the thought of ‘You ought’ melts into ‘For my sake,’ and through the dissolving face of the cold marble goddess there shine the beloved lineaments of Him who ‘wears the Godhead's most benignant grace,’ the smile

upon His face becomes a motive that touches all hearts. Transmute obligation into gratitude, and in front of duty and appeals to self put Christ, and all the harshness and difficulty and burden and self-sacrifice of obedience becomes easy and a joy.

Then let me remind you that this one supreme aim of pleasing Jesus Christ can be carried on through all life in every varying form, great or small. A blessed unity is given to our whole being when the little things and the big things, the easy things and the hard things, deeds which are conspicuous and deeds which no eye sees, are all brought under the influence of the one motive and made co-operant to the one end. Drive that one steadfast aim through your lives like a bar of iron, and it will give the lives strength and consistency—not rigidity, because they may still be flexible. Nothing will be too small to be consecrated by that motive; nothing too great to own its power. You can please Him everywhere and always. The only thing that is inconsistent with pleasing Him is the thing which, alas! we do at all times and should do at no time, and that is to sin against Him. If we bear with us this as a conscious motive in every part of our day's work it will give us a quick discernment as to what is evil, which I believe nothing else will so surely give. If you desire life to be noble, uniform, dignified, great in its minutest acts and solemn in its very trifles, and if you would have some continual test and standard by which you can detect all spurious,

apparent virtues, and discover lurking and masked temptations, carry this one aim clear and high above all else, and make it the purpose of the whole life, to be well-pleasing unto Him.

II. Now, in the next place, notice the concentrated effort which this aim requires.

The word rendered in my text ‘labour’ is a peculiar one, very seldom employed in Scripture. It means, in its most literal signification, to be fond of honour, or to be actuated by a love of honour; and hence it comes, by a very natural transition, to mean to strive to gain something for the sake of the honour connected with it. That is to say, it not only expresses the notion of diligent, strenuous effort, but it reveals the reason for that diligence and strenuousness in what I may call (for the word might almost be so rendered) the *ambition* of being honoured by pleasing Christ. So that the ‘labour’ of my text covers the whole ground, not only of the act but of its motive. The concentration of effort which such an aim requires may be enforced by one or two simple exhortations.

First, let me say that we ought, as Christian people, to cultivate this noble ambition of pleasing Jesus Christ. Men have all got the love of approbation deep in them. God put it there for a good purpose, not that we might shape our lives so as to get others to pat us on the back, and say, ‘Well done!’ but that, in addition to the

other solemn and sovereign motives for following the paths of righteousness, we might have this highest ambition to impel us on the road. And it is the duty of all Christians to see to it that they discipline themselves so as, in their own feelings, to put high above all the approbation or censure of their fellows the approbation or censure of Jesus Christ. That will take some cultivation. It is a great deal easier to shape our courses so as to get one another's praise. I remember a quaint saying in a German book. ‘An old schoolmaster tried to please this one and that one, and it failed. “Well, then,” said he, “I will try to please Christ.” And that succeeded.’

And let me remind you that a second part of the concentration of effort which this aim requires is to strive with the utmost energy in the accomplishment of it. Paul did not believe that anybody could please Jesus Christ without a fight for it. His notion of acceptable service was service which a man suppressed much to render, and overcame much to bring. And I urge upon you this, dear brethren, that with all the mob of faces round about us which shut out Christ's face, and with all the temptations to follow other aims, and with the weaknesses of our own characters, it never was, is not, nor ever will be, an easy thing, or a thing to be done without a struggle and a dead lift, to live so as to be well-pleasing to Him.

Look at Paul's metaphors with which he sets

forth the Christian life—a warfare, a race, a struggle, a building up of some great temple structure, and the like—all suggesting at the least the idea of patient, persistent, continuous toil, and most of them suggesting also the idea of struggle with antagonistic forces and difficulties, either within or without. So we must set our shoulders to the wheel, put our backs into our work. Do not think that you are going to be carried into the condition of conformity with Jesus Christ in a dream, or that the road to heaven is a primrose path, to be trodden in silver slippers. 'I will not offer unto the Lord that which doth cost me nothing,' and if you do, it will be worth exactly what it costs. There must be concentration of effort if we are to be well-pleasing to Him.

But then do not forget, on the other hand, that deeper than all effort, and the very spring and life of it, there must be the opening of our hearts for the entrance of His life and spirit, by the presence of which only are we well-pleasing to Christ. That which pleases Him in you and me is our likeness to Him. According to the old Puritan illustration, the refiner sat by the furnace until he could see in the molten metal his own face mirrored, and then he knew it was pure. So what pleases Christ in us is the reflection of Himself. And how can we get that likeness to Himself except by receiving into our hearts the Spirit that was in Christ Jesus, and will dwell in us, and will produce in us in our measure the same image that it formed in Him?

'Work *out* your own salvation,' because 'it is God that worketh *in* you.' Labour, concentrate effort, and above all open the heart to the entrance of that transforming power.

III. Lastly, let me suggest the utter insignificance to which this aim reduces all externals.

'We labour,' says Paul, 'that whether present or absent, we may be accepted.' What differences of condition are covered by that parenthetical phrase—'present or absent!' He talks about it as if it was a very small matter, does he not? And what is included in it? Whether a man shall be in the body or out of it; that is to say, whether he be alive or dead. Here is an aim then, so great, so lofty, so all-comprehensive that it reduces the difference between living in the world and being out of it, to a trifle. And if we stand so high up that these two varieties of condition dwindle into insignificance and seem to have melted into one, do you think that there is anything else that will be very big? If the difference between life and death is dwindled and dwarfed, what else do you suppose will remain? Nothing, I should think.

So if we only, by God's help, which will be given to us if we want it, keep this clear before us as the motive of all our life, then all the possible alternatives of human condition and circumstance will sink into insignificance, and

from that lofty summit will ‘show scarce so gross as beetles’ in the air beneath our lofty station.

Whether we be rich or poor, solitary or beset by friends, happy or sad, hopeful or despairing, young or old, wearied or buoyant, learned or foolish, it matters not. The one aim lifts itself before us, and they in whose eyes shine the light of that great issue are careless of the road along which they pass. Do you enlist yourselves in the company that fires at the long range, and all those that take aim at the shorter ones will seem to be very pitifully limiting their powers.

Then remember that this same aim, and this same result may be equally pursued and attained whether here or yonder. It is something to have a course of life which runs straight along, unbent aside, and not cut short off, by the change from earth to Heaven. And this felicity he only has who, amidst things temporal and insignificant, sees and seeks the eternal smile on the face of his unchanging Saviour. On earth, in death, through eternity, such a life will be homogeneous and of a piece; and when all other aims are hull down below the horizon, forgotten and out of sight, then still this will be the purpose, and yonder it will be the accomplished purpose, of each, to please the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friend, remember that in its full meaning this aim regards the future, and points onward to that great judgment-seat where you and I will certainly each of us give account of

himself. Do you think that you will please Christ then? Do you think that when that day dawns, a smile of welcome will come into His eyes, and a glow of gladness at the meeting into yours? Or have you cause to fear that you will 'call on the rocks and the hills to cover you from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne?'

We are all close by one another; our voices are very audible to each other. Do you learn, Christian people, that the first,—or at least a prime—condition of all Christian and Christ-pleasing life, is a wholesome disregard of what anybody says but Himself. The old Lacedæmonians used to stir themselves to heroism by the thought: 'What will they say of us in Sparta?' The governor of some outlying English colony minds very little what the people that he is set to rule think about him. He reports to Downing Street, and it is the opinion of the Home Government that influences him. You report to headquarters. Never mind what anybody else thinks of you. Your business is to please Christ, and the less you trouble yourselves about pleasing men the more you will succeed in doing it. Be deaf to the tittle tattle of your fellow soldiers in the ranks. It is your Commander's smile that will be your highest reward.

'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eye
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'

THE LOVE THAT CONSTRAINS

> 'The love of Christ constraineth us.'—2 COR. v. 14.

It is a dangerous thing to be unlike other people. It is still more dangerous to be better than other people. The world has a little heap of depreciatory terms which it flings, age after age, at all men who have a higher standard and nobler aims than their fellows. A favourite term is 'mad.' So, long ago they said, 'The prophet is a fool; the spiritual man is mad,' and, in His turn, Jesus was said to be 'beside Himself,' and Festus shouted from the judgment-seat to Paul that he was mad. A great many people had said the same thing about him before, as the context shows. For the verse before my text is: 'Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.' Now the former clause can only refer to other people's estimate of the Apostle. No doubt there were many things about him that gave colour to it. He said that a dead Man had appeared to him and spoken with him. He said that he had been carried up into the third heaven. He had a very strange creed in the judgment of the times. He had abandoned a brilliant career for a very poor one. He was obviously utterly indifferent to the ordinary aims of men. He had a consuming enthusiasm. And so the world explained him satisfactorily to itself by the short and easy method of saying, 'Insane.' And Paul explained

himself by the great word of my text, ‘The love of Christ constraineth us.’ Wherever there is a life adequately under the influence of Christ's love the results will be such as an unsympathising world may call madness, but which are the perfection of sober-mindedness. Would there were more such madmen! I wish to try to make one or two of them now, by getting some of you to take for your motto, ‘The love of Christ constraineth us.’

I. Now the first thing to notice is this constraining love.

I need not spend time in showing that when Paul says here ‘The love of Christ,’ he means Christ's love to him, not his to Christ. That is in accordance with his continual usage of the expression; and it is in accordance with facts. For it is not my love to Jesus, but His love to me, that brings the real moulding power into my life, and my love to Him is only the condition on which the true power acts upon me. To get the fulcrum and the lever which will heave a life up to the heights you have to get out of yourselves.

Now Paul never saw Jesus Christ in this earthly life. Timothy, who is associated with him in this letter, and perhaps is one of the ‘us,’ never saw Him either. The Corinthian believers whom he is addressing had, of course, never seen Him. And yet the Apostle has not the slightest hesitation in taking that great benediction of Christ's love and spreading it over

them all. That love is independent of time and of space; it includes humanity, and is co-extensive with it. Unturned away by unworthiness, unrepelled by non-responsiveness, undisgusted by any sin, unwearied by any, however numerous, foiling of its attempts, the love of Christ, like the great heavens that bend above us, wraps us all in its sweetness, and showers upon us all its light and its dew.

And yet, brethren, I would have you remember that whilst we thus try to paint, in poor, poor words, the universality of that love, we have to remember that it does not partake of the weakness that infects all human affections, which are only strong when they are narrow, and as the river expands it becomes shallow, and loses the force in its flow which it had when it was gathered between straiter banks, so as that a universal charity is almost akin to a universal indifference. But this love that grasps us all, this river that 'proceedeth from the Throne of God and of the Lamb,' flows in its widest reaches as deep and as impetuous in its career as if it were held within the narrowest of gorges. For Christ's universal love is universal only because it is individualising and particular. We love our nation by generalising and losing sight of the individuals. Christ loves the world because He loves every man and woman in it, and His grace enwraps all because His grace hovers over each.

'The sun whose beams most glorious are
  Despiseth no beholder,'

but the rays come straight to each eyeball. Be sure of this: that He who, when the multitude thronged Him and pressed Him, felt the tremulous, timid, scarcely perceptible touch of one woman's wasted finger on the hem of His garment, holds each of us in the grasp of His love, which is universal, because it applies to each. You and I have each the whole radiance of it pouring down on our heads, and none intercepts the beams from any other. So, brethren, let us each feel not only the love that grasps the world, but the love that empties itself on me.

But there is one more remark that I wish to make in reference to this constraining love of Jesus Christ, and that is, that in order to see and feel it we must take the point of view that this Apostle takes in my text. For hearken how he goes on. 'The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died, and that He died for all,' etc. That is to say, the death of Christ for all, which is equivalent to the death of Christ for each, is the great solvent by which the love of God melts men's hearts, and is the great proof that Jesus Christ loves me, and thee, and all of us. If you strike out that conception you have struck out from your Christianity the vindication of the belief that Christ loves the world. What possible meaning is there in the expression, 'He died for all?' How can the fact of His death on a 'green hill' outside the gates of a little city in Syria have world-wide issues, unless in that death He

bore, and bore away, the sins of the whole world? I know that there have been many—and there are many to-day—who not accepting what seems to me to be the very vital heart of Christianity—viz. the death of Christ for the world's sin, do yet cherish—as I think illogically—yet do cherish a regard for Him, which puts some of us who call ourselves ‘orthodox,’ and are tepid, to the blush. Thank God! men are often better than their creeds, as well as worse than them. But that fact does not affect what I am saying now, and what I beg you to take for what you find it to be worth, that unless we believe that Jesus Christ died for all, I do not know what claim He has on the love of the world. We shall admire Him, we shall bow before Him, as the very realised ideal of humanity, though how this one Man has managed to escape the taint of the all-pervading evil remains, upon that hypothesis, very obscure. But love Him? No! Why should I? But if I feel that His death had world-wide issues, and that He went down into the darkness in order that He might bring the world into the light, then—and I am sure, on the wide scale and in the long-run only then—will men turn to Him and say, ‘Thou hast died for me, help me to live for Thee.’ Brethren, I beseech you, take care of emptying the death of Christ of its deepest meaning, lest you should thereby rob His character of its chiefest charm, and His name of its mightiest soul-melting power. The love that constraineth is the love that died, and died for all, because it

died for each.

II. Now let me ask you to consider the echo of this constraining love.

I said a moment or two ago that Christ's love to us is the constraining power, and that ours to Him is but the condition on which that power works. But between the two there comes something which brings that constraining love to bear upon our hearts. And so notice what my text goes on to adduce as needful for Christ's love to have its effect—namely, ‘because we thus judge,’ etc. Then my estimate, my apprehension of the love of Christ must come in between its manifestation and its power to grip, to restrain, to impel me. If I may use such a figure, He stands, as it were, bugle in hand, and blows the sweet strains that are meant to set the echoes flying. But the rock must receive the impact of the vibrations ere it can throw back the thinned echo of the music. Love must be believed and known ere it can be responded to.

Now the only answer and echo that hearts desire is the love of the beloved heart. We all know that in our earthly life. Love is as much a hunger to be loved as the outgoing of my own affection. The two things are inseparable, and there is nothing that repays love but love. Jesus Christ wishes each of us to love Him. If it is true that He loves me, then, intertwisted with the outgoing of His heart towards me is the yearning that my heart may go out towards Him. Dear

brethren, this is no pulpit rhetoric, it is a plain, simple fact, inseparable from the belief in Christ's love—that He wishes you and every soul of man to love Him, and that, whatever else you bring, lip reverence, orthodox belief, apparent surrender, in the assay shop of His great mint all these are rejected, and the only metal that passes the fire is the pure gold of an answering love. Brethren! is that what you bring to Jesus Christ?

Love seeks for love, and our love can only be an echo of His. He takes the beginning in everything. If I am to love Him back again, I must have faith in His love to me. And if that be so, then the true way by which you, imperfect Christian people, can deepen and strengthen your love to Jesus Christ is not so much by efforts to work up a certain warmth of sentiment and glow of affection, as by gazing, with believing eyes of the heart, upon that which kindles your love to Him. If you want ice to melt, put it out into the sunshine, If you want the mirror to gleam, do not spend all your time in polishing it. Carry it where it can catch the ray, and it will flash it back in glory. ‘We love Him because He first loved us.’ Our love is an echo; be sure that you listen for the parent note, and link yourselves by faith with that great love which has come down from Heaven for us all.

But how can I speak about echoes and responses when I know that there are scores of men and women whom a preacher's words reach

who would be ashamed of themselves, and rightly, if they exhibited the same callousness of heart and selfishness of ingratitude to some human, partial benefactor as they are not ashamed to have exhibited all their lives to Jesus Christ. Echo? Yes! your heartstrings are set vibrating fast enough whenever, in the adjoining apartment, an instrument is touched which is tuned to the same key as your heart. Pleasures, earthly aims, worldly gifts, the sweetnesses of human life, all these things set them thrilling, and you can hear the music, but your hearts are not tuned to answer to the note that is struck in 'He loved me and gave Himself for me.' The bugle is blown, and there is silence, and no echo, faint and far, comes whispering back. Brethren, we use no one else, in whose love we have any belief, a thousandth part so ill as we use Jesus Christ.

III. Now, lastly, let me say a word about the constraining influence of this echoed love.

Its first effect, if it has any real power in our hearts and lives, will be to change their centre, to decentralise. Look what the Apostle goes on to say: 'We thus judge that He ... died for all, that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves.' That is the great transformation. Secure that, and all nobleness will follow, and 'whatsoever things are lovely and of good report' will come, like doves to their windows, flocking into the soul that has ceased to find its centre in its poor rebellious self. All

love derives its power to elevate, refine, beautify, ennoble, conquer, from the fact that, in lower degree, all love makes the beloved the centre, and not the self. Hence the mother's self-sacrifice, hence the sweet reciprocity of wedded life, hence everything in humanity that is noble and good. Love is the antagonist of selfishness, and the highest type of love should be, and in the measure in which we are under the influence of Christ's love will be, the self-surrendering life of a Christian man. I know that in saying so I am condemning myself and my brethren. All the same, it is true. The one power that rescues a man from the tyranny of living for self, which is the mother of all sin and ignobleness, is when a man can say ‘Christ is my aim,’ ‘Christ is my object.’ ‘The life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’ There is no secret of self-annihilation, which is self-transfiguration, and, I was going to say, deification, like that of loving Christ with all my heart because He has loved me so.

Again, let me remind you that, on its lower reaches and levels, we find that all true affection has in it a strange power of assimilating its objects to one another. Just as a man and woman who have lived together for half a century in wedded life come to have the same notions, the same prejudices, the same tastes, and sometimes you can see their very faces being moulded into likeness, so, if I love Jesus Christ, I shall by degrees grow liker and liker to

Him, and be ‘changed into the same image, from glory to glory.’

Again, the love constrains, and not only constrains but impels, because it becomes a joy to divine and to do the will of the beloved Christ. ‘My yoke is easy.’ Is it? It is very hard to be a Christian. His requirements are a great deal sterner than others. His yoke is easy, not because it is a lighter yoke, but because it is padded with love. And that makes all service a sacrament, and the surrender of my own will, which is the essence of obedience, a joy.

So, dear friends, we come here in sight of the unique and blessed characteristic of all Christian morality, and of all its practical exhortations, and the Gospel stands alone as the mightiest moulding power in the world, just because its word is ‘love, and do as thou wilt.’ For in the measure of thy love will thy will coincide with the will of Christ. There is nothing else that has anything like that power. We do not want to be told what is right. We know it a great deal better than we practise it. A revelation from heaven that simply told me my duty would be surplusage. ‘If there had been a law that could have given life, righteousness had been by the law.’ We want a life, not a law, and the love of Christ brings the life to us.

And so, dear friends, that life, restrained and impelled by the love to which it is being assimilated, is a life of liberty and a life of

blessedness. In the measure in which the love of Christ constrains any man, it makes for him difficulties easy, the impossible possible, the crooked things straight, and the rough places plain. The duty becomes a delight, and self ceases to disturb. If the love of God is shed abroad in a heart, and in the measure in which it is, that heart will be at rest, and a great peace will brood over it. Then the will bows in glad submission, and all the powers arise to joyous service. We are lords of the world and ourselves when we are Christ's servants for love's sake; and earth and its good are never so good as when the power of His echoed love rules our lives. Do you know and believe that Christ loves you? Do you know and believe that you had a place in His heart when He hung on the Cross for the salvation of the world? Have you answered that love with yours, kindled by your faith in, and experience of, His? Is His love the overmastering impulse which urges you to all good, the mighty constraint that keeps you back from all evil, the magnet that draws, the anchor that steadies, the fortress that defends, the light that illumines, the treasure that enriches? Is it the law that commands, and the power that enables? Then you are blessed, though people will perhaps say that you are mad, whilst here; and you will be blessed for ever and ever.

THE ENTREATIES OF GOD

> 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech ... by us: we pray ... in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'—2 COR. v. 20.

These are wonderful and bold words, not so much because of what they claim for the servants as because of what they reveal of the Lord. That thought, 'as though God did beseech,' seems to me to be the one deserving of our attention now, far rather than any inferences which may be drawn from the words as to the relation of preachers of the Gospel to man and to God. I wish, therefore, to try to set forth the wonderfulness of this mystery of a beseeching God, and to put by the side of it the other wonder and mystery of men refusing the divine beseechings.

Before doing so, however, I remark that the supplement which stands in our Authorised Version in this text is a misleading and unfortunate one. 'As though God did beseech *you*' and 'we pray *you*' unduly narrow the scope of the Apostolic message, and confuse the whole course of the Apostolic reasoning here. For he has been speaking of a world which is reconciled to God, and he finds a consequence of that reconciliation of the world in the fact that he and his fellow-preachers are entrusted with the word of reconciliation. The scope of their message, then, can be no narrower than the scope of the reconciliation; and inasmuch as that

is world-wide the beseeching must be co-extensive therewith, and must cover the whole ground of humanity. It is a universal message that is set forth here. The Corinthians, to whom Paul was speaking, are, by his hypothesis, already reconciled to God, and the message which he has in trust for them is given in the subsequent words: 'We then, as workers together with God, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.' But the message, the pleading of the divine heart, 'be ye reconciled to God,' is a pleading that reaches over the whole range of a reconciled world. I take then, just these two thoughts, God beseeching man, and man refusing God.

I. God beseeching man.

Now notice how, in my text, there alternates, as if substantially the same idea, the thoughts that Christ and that God pray men to be reconciled. 'We are ambassadors on *Christ's* behalf, as though *God* did beseech you by us, we pray on *Christ's* behalf.' So you see, first, Christ the Pleader, then God beseeching, then Christ again entreating and praying. Could any man have so spoken, passing instinctively from the one thought to the other, unless he had believed that whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise; and that Jesus Christ is the Representative of the whole Deity for mankind, so as that when He pleads God pleads, and God pleads through Him. I do not dwell upon this, but I simply wish to mark it in

passing as one of the innumerable strong and irrefragable testimonies to the familiarity and firmness with which that thought of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the full revelation of the Father by Him, was grasped by the Apostle, and was believed by the people to whom he spoke. God pleads, therefore Christ pleads, Christ pleads, therefore God pleads; and these Two are One in their beseechings, and the voice of the Father echoes to us in the tenderness of the Son.

So, then, let us think of that pleading. To sue for love, to beg that an enemy will put away his enmity is the part of the inferior rather than of the superior; is the part of the offender rather than of the offended; is the part of the vanquished rather than of the victor; is the part surely not of the king but of the rebel. And yet here, in the sublime transcending of all human precedent and pattern which characterises the divine dealing, we have the place of the suppliant and of the supplicated inverted, and Love upon the Throne bends down to ask of the rebel that lies powerless and sullen at His feet, and yet is not conquered until his heart be won, though his limbs be manacled, that he would put away all the bitterness out of his heart, and come back to the love and the grace which are ready to pour over him. ‘He that might the vengeance best have taken, finds out the remedy.’ He against whom we have transgressed prays us to be reconciled; and the Infinite Love lowers Himself in that lowering which is, in another aspect, the climax of His exaltation, to

pray the rebels to accept His amnesty.

Oh, dear brethren! this is no mere piece of rhetoric. What facts in the divine heart does it represent? What facts in the divine conduct does it represent? It represents these facts in the divine heart, that there is in it an infinite longing for the creature's love, an infinite desire for unity between Him and us.

There are wonderful significance and beauty in the language of my text which are lost in the Authorised Version; but are preserved in the Revised. 'We are ambassadors' not only '*for* Christ,' but '*on Christ's behalf*.' And the same proposition is repeated in the subsequent clause. 'We pray you,' not merely 'in Christ's stead,' though that is much, but '*on His account*,' which is more—as if it lay very near His heart that we should put away our enmity; and as if in some transcendent and wonderful manner the all-perfect, self-sufficing God was made glad, and the Master, who is His image for us, 'saw of the travail of His soul, and,' in regard to one man, 'was satisfied,' when the man lets the warmth of God's love in Christ thaw away the coldness out of his heart, and kindle there an answering flame. An old divine says, 'We cannot do God a greater pleasure or more oblige His very heart, than to trust in Him as a God of love.' He is ready to stoop to any humiliation to effect that purpose. So intense is the divine desire to win the world to His love, that He will stoop to sue for it rather than lose it. Such is at least part of

the fact in the divine heart, which is shadowed forth for us by that wonderful thought of the beseeching God.

And what facts in the divine conduct does this great word represent? A God that beseeches. Well, think of the tears of imploring love which fell from Christ's eyes as He looked across the valley from Olivet, and saw the Temple glittering in the early sunshine. Think of ‘O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! ... how often would I have gathered thy children together ... and ye would not.’ And are we not to see in the Christ who wept in the earnestness of His desire, and in the pain of its disappointment, the very revelation of the Father's heart and the very action of the Father's arm? ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ That is Christ beseeching and God beseeching in Him. Need I quote other words, gentle, winning, loving? Do we not feel, when looking upon Christ, as if the secret of His whole life was the stretching out imploring and welcoming hands to men, and praying them to grasp His hands, and be saved? But, oh, brethren! the fact that towers above all others, which explains the whole procedure of divinity, and is the keystone of the whole arch of revelation; the fact which reveals in one triple beam of light, God, man, and sin in the clearest illumination, is the Cross of Jesus Christ. And if that be not the very sublime of entreaty; and if any voice can be conceived, human or divine, that shall reach men's hearts with a more

piercing note of pathetic invitation than sounds from that Cross, I know not where it is. Christ that dies, in His dying breath calls to us, and 'the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel'; inasmuch as its voice is, 'Come unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.'

Not only in the divine facts of the life and death of Jesus Christ, but in all the appeals of that great revelation which lies before us in Scripture; and may I say, in the poor, broken utterances of men whose harsh, thin voices try to set themselves, in some measure, to the sweetness and the fulness of His beseeching tones—does God call upon you to draw close to Him, and put away your enmity. And not only by His Word written or ministered from human lips, but also by the patient providences of His love He calls and prays you to come. A mother will sometimes, in foolish fondness, coax her sullen child by injudicious kindness, or, in wise patience, will seek to draw the little heart away from the faults that she desires not to notice, by redoubled ingenuity of tenderness and of care. And so God does with us. When you and I, who deserve—oh! so different treatment—get, as we do get, daily care and providential blessings from Him, is not that His saying to us, 'I beseech you to cherish no alienation, enmity, indifference, but to come back and live in the love'? When He draws near to us in these outward gifts of His mercy, is He not doing Himself what He has bid us to do; and what He

never could have bid us to do, nor our hearts have recognised to be the highest strain of human virtue to do, unless He Himself were doing it first? 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.'

Not only by the great demonstration of His stooping and infinite desire for our love which lies in the life and death of Jesus Christ, nor only by His outward work, nor by His providence, but by many an inward touch on our spirits, by many a prick of conscience, by many a strange longing that has swept across our souls, sudden as some perfumed air in the scentless atmosphere; by many an inward voice, coming we know not whence, that has spoken to us of Him, of His love, of our duty; by many a drawing which has brought us nearer to the Cross of Jesus Christ, only, alas! in some cases that we might recoil further from it,—has He been beseeching, beseeching us all.

Brethren! God pleads with you. He pleads with you because there is nothing in His heart to any of you but love, and a desire to bless you; He pleads with you because, unless you will let Him, He cannot lavish upon you His richest gifts and His highest blessings. He pleads with you, bowing to the level, and beneath the level, of your alienation and reluctance. And the sum and substance of all His dealings with every soul is, 'My son! give Me thy heart.' 'Be ye reconciled to God.'

II. And now turn, very briefly, to the next suggestion arising from this text, the terrible obverse, so to speak, of the coin: Man refusing a beseeching God.

That is the great paradox and mystery. Nobody has ever fathomed that yet, and nobody will. How it comes, how it is possible, there is no need for us to inquire. It is an awful and a solemn power that every poor little speck of humanity has, to lift itself up in God's face, and say, in answer to all His pleadings, 'I will not!' as if the dwellers in some little island, a mere pin-point of black, barren rock, jutting up at sea, were to declare war against a kingdom that stretched through twenty degrees of longitude on the mainland. So we, on our little bit of island, our pin-point of rock in the great waste ocean, we can separate ourselves from the great Continent; or, rather, God has, in a fashion, made us separate in order that we may either unite ourselves with Him, by our willing yielding, or wrench ourselves away from Him by our antagonism and rebellion. God beseeches because God has so settled the relations between Him and us, that that is what He has to do in order to get men to love Him. He cannot force them. He cannot prise open a man's heart with a crowbar, as it were, and force Himself inside. The door opens from within. 'Behold! I stand at the door and knock.' There is an 'if.' 'If any man open I will come in.' Hence the beseeching, hence the wail of wisdom that cries aloud and no man regards it; of love that stands at the

entering in of the city, and pleads in vain, and says, 'I have called, and ye have refused.... How often would I have gathered ... and ye would not.' Oh, brethren! it is an awful responsibility, a mysterious prerogative, which each one of us, whether consciously or no, has to exercise, to accept or to refuse the pleadings of an entreating Christ.

And let me remind you that the act of refusal is a very simple one. Not to accept is to reject; not to yield is to rebel. You have only to do nothing, to do it all. There are dozens of people in our churches and chapels listening with self-satisfied unconcern, who have all their lives been refusing a beseeching God. And they do not know that they ever did it! They say, 'Oh! I will be a Christian some time or other.' They cherish vague ideas that, somehow or other, they are so already. They have done nothing at all, they have simply been absolutely indifferent and passive. Some of you have heard sermons like this so often that they produce no effect. 'It is the right kind of thing to say. It is the thing we have heard a hundred times.' Perhaps you wonder why I should be so much in earnest about the matter, and then you go outside, and discuss me or the weather, and forget all about the sermon.

And thus, once more, you reject Christ. It is done without knowing it; done simply by doing nothing. My brother! do not stop your ears any more against that tender, imploring love.

Then let me remind you that this refusing the beseeching of God is the climax of all folly. For consider what it is,—a man refusing his highest good and choosing his certain ruin. I am afraid that people have been arguing and fighting so much of late years over disputable points in reference to the doctrine of future retribution that the indisputable fact of such retribution has lost much of its solemn power.

I pray you, brethren, to ask yourselves one question: Is there anything, in the present or in the future condition of a man that is not reconciled to God, which explains God's beseeching urgency? Why this energy and intensity of divine desire? Why this which, if it were human only, would be called *passionate* entreaty? Why was it needful for Jesus Christ to die? Why was it worth His while to bear the punishment of man's sin? Why should God and Christ, through all the ages, plead with unintermittent voice? There must be some explanation of it all, and here is the explanation, 'They that hate Me love *death*.' 'Be ye reconciled to God,' for enmity is ruin and destruction.

And finally, dear friends, this turning away from Him that speaketh from Heaven, of which some of you have all your lives been guilty, is not only supreme folly, but it is the climax of all guilt. For there can be nothing worse, darker, arguing a nature more averse or indifferent to the highest good, than that God should plead, and I should steel my heart and deafen mine ear

against His voice. The crown of a man's sin, because it is the disclosure of the secrets of his deepest heart as loving darkness rather than light, is turning away from the divine voice that woos us to love and to God.

Oh! there are some of you that have heard that Voice too often to be much touched by it. There are some of you too busy to attend to it, who hear it not because of the clatter of the streets and the whir of the spindles. There are some of you that are seeking to drown it in the shouts of mirth and revelry. There are some of you to whom it comes muffled in the mists of doubt; but I beseech you all, look at the Cross, *look at the Cross!* and hear Him that hangs there pleading with you.

Before the battle there comes out the captain of the twenty thousand to the King with the ten thousand, who in His loftiness is not afraid to stoop to sue for peace from the weaker power. My brother! the moment is precious; the white flag may never be waved before your eyes again. Do not; do not refuse! or the next instant the clarion of the assault may sound, and where will you be then?

It is vain for thee to rush against the thick bosses of the Almighty buckler. ‘We beseech, in Christ's behalf, be ye reconciled with God.’

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