Expositions of Holy Scripture 'St. John Chapters I to XIV'

by

Alexander Maclaren

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THE WORD IN ETERNITY, IN THE WORLD, AND IN THE FLESH

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. 4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. 11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. 12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'—JOHN i. 1-14.

The other Gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with 'the bosom of the Father.' Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his 'in the beginning.' To attempt adequate exposition of these verses in our narrow limits is absurd; we can only note the salient points of this, the profoundest page in the New Testament.

The threefold utterance in verse 1 carries us into the depths of eternity, before time or creatures were. Genesis and John both start from 'the beginning,' but, while Genesis works downwards from that point and tells what followed, John works upwards and tells what preceded—if we may use that term in speaking of what lies beyond time. Time and creatures came into being, and, when they began, the Word 'was.' Surely no form of speech could more emphatically declare absolute, uncreated being, outside the limits of time. Clearly, too, no interpretation of these words fathoms their depth, or makes worthy sense, which does not recognise that the Word is a person. The second clause of verse 1 asserts the eternal communion of the Word with God. The preposition employed means accurately 'towards,' and expresses the thought that in the Word there was motion or tendency towards, and not merely association with, God. It points to reciprocal, conscious communion, and the active going out of love in the direction of God. The last clause asserts the community of essence, which is not inconsistent with distinction of persons, and makes the communion of active Love possible; for none could, in the depths of eternity, dwell with and perfectly love and be loved by God, except one who Himself was God.

Verse 1 stands apart as revealing the pretemporal and essential nature of the Word. In it the deep ocean of the divine nature is partially disclosed, though no created eye can either plunge to discern its depths or travel beyond our horizon to its boundless, shoreless extent. The remainder of the passage deals with the majestic march of the self-revealing Word through creation, and illumination of humanity, up to the climax in the Incarnation.

John repeats the substance of verse 1 in verse 2, apparently in order to identify the Agent of creation with the august person whom he has disclosed as filling eternity. By Him creation was effected, and, because He was what verse 1 has declared Him to be, therefore was it effected by Him. Observe the three steps marked in three consecutive verses. 'All things were made by Him'; literally 'became,' where the emergence into existence of created things is strongly contrasted with the divine 'was' of verse 1. 'Through Him' declares that the Word is the agent of creation; 'without Him' (literally, 'apart from Him') declares that created things continue in existence because He communicates it to them. Man is the highest of these 'all things,' and verse 4 sets forth the relation of the Word to Him, declaring that 'life,' in all the width and height of its possible meanings, inheres in Him, and is communicated by Him, with its distinguishing accompaniment, in human nature, of light, whether of reason or of conscience.

So far, John has been speaking as from the upper or divine side, but in verse 5 he speaks from the under or human, and shows us how the self-revelation of the Word has, by some mysterious necessity, been conflict. The 'darkness' was not made by Him, but it is there, and the beams of the light have to contend with it. Something alien must have come in, some catastrophe have happened, that the light should have to stream into a region of darkness.

John takes 'the Fall' for granted, and in verse 5 describes the whole condition of things, both within and beyond the region of special revelation. The shining of the light is continuous, but the darkness is obstinate. It is the tragedy and crime of the world that the darkness will not have the light. It is the long-suffering mercy of God that the light repelled is not extinguished, but shines meekly on.

Verses 6-13 deal with the historical appearance of the Word. The Forerunner is introduced, as in the other Gospels; and, significantly enough, this Evangelist calls him only 'John,'—omitting 'the Baptist,' as was very natural to him, the other John, who would feel less need for distinguishing the two than others did. The subordinate office of a witness to the light is declared positively and negatively, and the dignity of such a function is implied. To witness to the light, and to be the means of leading men to believe, was honour for any man.

The limited office of the Forerunner serves as contrast to the transcendent lustre of the true Light. The meaning of verse 9 may be doubtful, but verses 10 and 11 clearly refer to the historical manifestation of the Word, and probably verse 9 does so too. Possibly, however, it rather points to the inner revelation by the Word, which is the 'light of men.' In that case the phrase 'that cometh into the world' would refer to 'every man,' whereas it is more natural in this context to refer it to 'the light,' and to see in the verse a reference to the illumination of humanity consequent on the appearance of Jesus Christ. The use of 'world' and 'came' in verses 10 and 11 points in that direction. Verse 9 represents the Word as 'coming'; verse 10 regards Him as come—'He was in the world.'

Note the three clauses, so like, and yet so unlike the august three in verse 1. Note the sad issue of the coming—'The world knew Him not.' In that 'world' there was one place where He might have looked for recognition, one set of people who might have been expected to

hail Him; but not only the wide world was blind ('knew not'), but the narrower circle of 'His own' fought against what they knew to be light ('received not').

But the rejection was not universal, and John proceeds to develop the blessed consequences of receiving the light. For the first time he speaks the great word 'believe.' The act of faith is the condition or means of 'receiving.' It is the opening of the mental eye for the light to pour in. We possess Jesus in the measure of our faith. The object of faith is 'His name,' which means, not this or that collocation of letters by which He is designated, but His whole self-revelation. The result of such faith is 'the right to become children of God,' for through faith in the only-begotten Son we receive the communication of a divine life which makes us, too, sons. That new life, with its consequence of sonship, does not belong to human nature as received from parents, but is a gift of God mediated through faith in the Light who is the Word.

Verse 14 is not mere repetition of the preceding, but advances beyond it in that it declares the wonder of the way by which that divine Word did enter into the world. John here, as it were, draws back the curtain, and shows us the transcendent miracle of divine love, for which he has been preparing in all the preceding. Note that he has not named 'the Word' since verse 1, but here he again uses the majestic expression to bring out strongly the contrast between the ante-temporal glory and the historical lowliness. These four words, 'The Word became flesh,' are the foundation of all our knowledge of God, of man, of the relations between them, the foundation of all our hopes, the guarantee of all our peace, the pledge of all blessedness. 'He tabernacled among us.' As the divine glory of old dwelt between the cherubim, so Jesus is among men the true Temple, wherein we see a truer glory than that radiant light which filled the closed chamber of the holy of holies. Rapturous remembrances rose before the Apostle as he wrote, 'We beheld His glory'; and he has told us what he has beheld and seen with his eyes, that we also may have fellowship with him in beholding. The glory that shone from the Incarnate Word was no menacing or dazzling light. He and it were 'full of grace and truth,' perfect Love bending to inferiors and sinners, with hands full of gifts and a heart full of tenderness and the revelation of reality, both as regards God and man. His grace bestows all that our lowness needs, His truth teaches all that our ignorance requires. All our gifts and all our knowledge come from the Incarnate Word, in whom believing we are the children of God.

THE LIGHT AND THE LAMPS

'He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.'—JOHN i. 8.

'He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in His light.'—JOHN v. 35.

My two texts both refer to John the Baptist. One of them is the Evangelist's account of him, the other is our Lord's eulogium upon him. The latter of my texts, as the Revised Version shows, would be more properly rendered, 'He was a lamp' rather than 'He was a light,' and the contrast between the two words, the 'light' and 'the lamps,' is my theme. I gather all that I would desire to say into three points: 'that Light' and its witnesses; the underived Light and the kindled lamps; the undying Light and the lamps that go out.

I. First of all, then, the contrast suggested to us is between 'that Light' and its witnesses.

John, in that profound prologue which is the deepest part of Scripture, and lays firm and broad in the depths the foundation-stones of a reasonable faith, draws the contrast between 'that Light' and them whose business it was to bear witness to it. As for the former, I cannot here venture to dilate upon the great, and to me absolutely satisfying and fundamental, thoughts that lie in these eighteen first verses of this Gospel. 'The Word was with God,' and that Word was the Agent of Creation, the Fountain of Life, the Source of the Light which is inseparable from all human life. John goes back, with the simplicity of a child's speech, which yet is deeper than all philosophies, to a Beginning, far anterior to 'the Beginning' of which Genesis speaks, and declares that before creation that Light shone; and he looks out over the whole world, and declares, that before and beyond the limits of the historical manifestation of the Word in the flesh, its beams spread over the whole race of man. But they are all focussed, if I may so speak, and gathered to a point which burns as well as illuminates, in the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ in the flesh. 'That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

Next, he turns to the highest honour and the most imperative duty laid, not only upon mighty men and officials, but upon all on whose happy eyeballs this Light has shone, and into whose darkened hearts the joy and peace and purity of it have flowed, and he says, 'He was sent'—and they are sent—'to bear witness of that Light.' It is the noblest function that a man can discharge. It is a function that is discharged by the very existence through the ages of a community which, generation after generation, subsists, and generation after generation manifests in varying degrees of brightness, and with various modifications of tint, the same light. There is the family character in all true Christians, with whatever diversities of idiosyncrasies, and national life or ecclesiastical distinctions. Whether it be Francis of Assisi or John Wesley, whether it be Thomas a Kempis or George Fox, the light is one that shines through these many-coloured panes of glass, and the living Church is the witness of a living Lord, not only before it, and behind it, and above it, but living in it. They are 'light' because they are irradiated by Him. They are 'light' because they are 'in the Lord.' But not only by the fact of the existence of such a community is the witness-bearing

effected, but it comes as a personal obligation, with immense weight of pressure and immense possibilities of joy in the discharge of it, to every Christian man and woman.

What, then, is the witness that we all are bound to bear, and shall bear if we are true to our obligations and to our Lord? Mainly, dear brethren, the witness of experience. That a Christian man shall be able to stand up and say, 'I know this because I live it, and I testify to Jesus Christ because I for myself have found Him to be the life of my life, the Light of all my seeing, the joy of my heart, my home, and my anchorage'—that is the witness that is impregnable. And there is no better sign of the trend of Christian thought to-day than the fact that the testimony of experience is more and more coming to be recognised by thoughtful men and writers as being the sovereign attestation of the reality of the Light. 'I see'; that is the proof that light has touched my eyeballs. And when a man can contrast, as some of us can, our present vision with our erstwhile darkness, then the evidence, like that of the sturdy blind man in the Gospels, who had nothing to say in reply to the subtleties and Rabbinical traps and puzzles but only 'I was blind; now I see'—his experience is likely to have the effect that it had in another miracle of healing: 'Beholding the man which was healed standing amongst them, they could say nothing against it.' I should think they could not.

But there is one thing that will always characterise the true witnesses to that Light, and that is self-suppression. Remember the beautiful, immovable humility of the Baptist about whom these texts were spoken: 'What sayest thou of thyself?' 'I am a Voice,' that is all. 'Art thou that Prophet?' 'No!' 'Art thou the Christ?' 'No! I am nothing but a Voice.' And remember how, when John's disciples tried to light the infernal fires of jealousy in his quiet heart by saying, 'He whom thou didst baptise, and to whom thou didst give witness'—He whom thou didst start on His career—'is baptising,' poaching upon thy preserves, 'and all men come unto Him,' the only answer that he gave was, 'The friend of the Bridegroom'—who stands by in a quiet, dark corner—'rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.' Keep yourself out of sight, Christian teachers and preachers; put Christ in the front, and hide behind Him.

II. Now let me ask you to look at the other contrast that is suggested by our other text. The underived light and the kindled lamps.

It is possible to read the words of that second text thus—'He was a lamp kindled and (therefore) shining.' But whether that be the meaning, or whether the usual rendering is correct, the emblem itself carries the same thought, for a lamp must be lit by contact with a light, and must be fed with oil, if its flame is to be sustained. And so the very metaphor-whatever the force of the ambiguous word—in its eloquent contrast between the Light and the lamp, suggests this thought, that the one is underived, self-fed, and therefore undying, and that the other owes all its flame to the touch of that uncreated Light, and burns brightly only on condition of its keeping up the contact with Him, and being fed continually from His stores of radiance.

I need not say more than a word with regard to the former member of that contrast suggested here. That unlit Light derives its brilliancy, according to the Scriptural teaching, from nothing but its divine union with the Father. So that long before there were eyes to see, there was the eradiation and outshining of the Father's glory. I do not enter into these

depths, but this I would say, that what is called the 'originality' of Jesus is only explained when we reverently see in that unique life the shining through a pure humanity, as through a sheet of alabaster, of that underived, divine Light. Jesus is an insoluble problem to men who will not see in Him the Eternal Light which 'in the beginning was with God.' You find in Him no trace of gradual acquisition of knowledge, or of arguing or feeling His way to His beliefs. You find in Him no trace of consciousness of a great horizon of darkness encompassing the region where He sees light. You find in Him no trace of a recognition of other sources from which He has drawn any portion of His light. You find in Him the distinct declaration that His relation to truth is not the relation of men who learn, and grow, and acquire, and know in part; for, says He, 'I am the Truth.' He stands apart from us all, and above us all, in that He owes His radiance to none, and can dispense it to every man. The question which the puzzled Jews asked about Him, 'How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?' may be widened out to all the characteristics of His human life. To me the only answer is: 'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ! Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

Dependent on Him are the little lights which He has lit, and in the midst of which He walks. Union with Jesus Christ—'that Light'—is the condition of all human light. That is true over all regions, as I believe. 'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' The candle of the Lord shines in every man, and 'that true Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Thinker, student, scientist, poet, author, practical man—all of them are lit from the uncreated Source, and all of them, if they understand their own nature, would say, 'In Thy light do we see Light.'

But especially is this great thought true and exemplified within the limits of the Christian life. For the Christian to be touched with Christ's Promethean finger is to flame into light. And the condition of continuing to shine is to continue the contact which first illuminated. A break in the contact, of a finger's breadth, is as effectual as one of a mile. Let Christian men and women, if they would shine, remember, 'Ye are light in the Lord'; and if we stray, and get without the circle of the Light, we pass into darkness, and ourselves cease to shine.

Brethren, it is threadbare truth, that the condition of Christian vitality and radiance is close and unbroken contact with Jesus Christ, the Source of all light. Threadbare; but if we lived as if we believed it, the Church would be revolutionised and the world illuminated; and many a smoking wick would flash up into a blazing torch. Let Christian people remember that the words of my text define no special privilege or duty of any official or man of special endowments, but that to all of us has been said, 'Ye are My witnesses,' and to all of us is offered the possibility of being 'burning and shining lights' if we keep ourselves close to that Light.

III. Lastly, the second of my texts suggests—the contrast between the Undying Light and the lamps that go out.

'For a season ye were willing to rejoice in His light.' There is nothing in the present condition of the civilised and educated world more remarkable and more difficult for some people to explain than the contrast between the relation which Jesus Christ bears to the present age, and the relation which all other great names in the past—philosophers, poets, guides of men—bear to it. There is nothing in the world the least like the vividness, the

freshness, the closeness, of the personal relation which thousands and thousands of people, with common sense in their heads, bear to that Man who died nineteen hundred years ago. All others pass, sooner or later, into the darkness. Thickening mists of oblivion, fold by fold, gather round the brightest names. But here is Jesus Christ, whom all classes of thinkers and social reformers have to reckon with to-day, who is a living power amongst the trivialities of the passing moment, and in whose words and in the teaching of whose life serious men feel that there lie undeveloped yet, and certainly not yet put into practice, principles which are destined to revolutionise society and change the world. And how does that come?

I am not going to enter upon that question; I only ask you to think of the contrast between His position, in this generation, to communities and individuals, and the position of all other great names which lie in the past. Why, it does not take more than a lifetime such as mine, for instance, to remember how the great lights that shone seventy years ago in English thinking and in English literature, have for the most part gone out, and what we young men thought to be bright particular stars, this new generation pooh-poohs as mere exhalations from the marsh or twinkling and uncertain tapers, and you will find their books in the twopenny-box at the bookseller's door. A cynical diplomatist, in one of our modern dramas, sums it up, after seeing the death of a revolutionary, 'I have known eight leaders of revolts.' And some of us could say, 'We have known about as many guides of men who have been forgotten and passed away.' 'His Name shall endure for ever. His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all generations shall call Him blessed.' Even Shelley had the prophecy forced from him—

'The moon of Mahomet
Arose and it shall set,
While blazoned as on heaven's eternal noon,
The Cross leads generations on.'

We may sum up the contrast between the undying Light and the lamps that go out in the old words: 'They truly were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, but this Man, because He continueth ever… is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through Him.'

So, brethren, when lamps are quenched, let us look to the Light. When our own lives are darkened because our household light is taken from its candlestick, let us lift up our hearts and hopes to Him that abideth for ever. Do not let us fall into the folly, and commit the sin, of putting our heart's affections, our spirit's trust, upon any that can pass and that must change. We need a Person whom we can clasp, and who never will glide from our hold. We need a Light uncreated, self-fed, eternal. 'Whilst ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of light.'

'THREE TABERNACLES'

'The Word … dwelt among us.'—JOHN i. 14.

'… He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.'—REV. vii. 15.

'… Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.'—REV. xxi. 3.

The word rendered 'dwelt' in these three passages, is a peculiar one. It is only found in the New Testament—in this Gospel and in the Book of Revelation. That fact constitutes one of the many subtle threads of connection between these two books, which at first sight seem so extremely unlike each other; and it is a morsel of evidence in favour of the common authorship of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse, which has often, and very vehemently in these latter days of criticism, been denied.

The force of the word, however, is the matter to which I desire especially to draw attention. It literally means 'to dwell in a tent,' or, if we may use such a word, 'to tabernacle,' and there is no doubt a reference to the Tabernacle in which the divine Presence abode in the wilderness and in the land of Israel before the erection. In all three passages, then, we may see allusion to that early symbolical dwelling of God with man. 'The Word tabernacled among us'; so is the truth for earth and time. 'He that sitteth upon the throne shall spread His tabernacle upon' the multitude which no man can number, who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb; that is the truth for the spirits of just men made perfect, the waiting Church, which expects the redemption of the body. 'God shall tabernacle with them'; that is the truth for the highest condition of humanity, when the Tabernacle of God shall be with redeemed men in the new earth. 'Let us build three tabernacles,' one for the Incarnate Christ, one for the interspace between earth and heaven, and one for the culmination of all things. And it is to these three aspects of the one thought, set forth in rude symbol by the movable tent in the wilderness, that I ask you to turn now.

I. First, then, we have to think of that Tabernacle for earth. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, as in a tent, amongst us.'

The human nature, the visible, material body of Jesus Christ, in which there enshrined itself the everlasting Word, which from the beginning was the Agent of all divine revelation, that is the true Temple of God. When we begin to speak about the special presence of Omnipresence in any one place, we soon lose ourselves, and get into deep waters of glory, where there is no standing. And I do not care to deal here with theological definitions or thorny questions, but simply to set forth, as the language of my text sets before us, that one transcendent, wonderful, all-blessed thought that this poor human nature is capable of, and has really once in the history of the world received into itself, the real, actual presence of the whole fulness of the Divinity. What must be the kindred and likeness between Godhood and manhood when into the frail vehicle of our humanity that wondrous treasure can be poured; when the fire of God can burn in the bush of our human nature, and that nature not be consumed? So it has been. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

And when we come with our questions, How? In what manner? How can the lesser contain the greater? we have to be content with the recognition that the manner is beyond our fathoming, and to accept the fact, pressed upon our faith, that our hearts may grasp it and be at peace. God hath dwelt in humanity. The everlasting Word, who is the forthcoming of all the fulness of Deity into the realm of finite creatures, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

But the Tabernacle was not only the dwelling-place of God, it was also and, therefore, the place of Revelation of God. So in our text there follows, 'we beheld His glory.' As in the tent in the wilderness there hovered between the outstretched wings of the silent cherubim, above the Mercy-seat, the brightness of the symbolical cloud which was expressly named 'the glory of God,' and was the visible manifestation of His real presence; so John would have us think that in that lowly humanity, with its curtains and its coverings of flesh, there lay shrined in the inmost place the brightness of the light of the manifest glory of God. 'We beheld His glory.' The rapturous adoration of the remembrance overcomes him, and he breaks his sentence, reckless of grammatical connection, as the fulness of the blessed memory floods into his soul. 'That glory was as of the Only Begotten of the Father.' The manifestation of God in Christ is unique, as becomes Him who partakes of the nature of that God of whom He is the Representative and the Revealer.

And how did that glory make itself known to us? By miracle? Yes! As we read in the story of the first that Christ wrought, 'He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed upon Him.' By miracle? Yes! As we read His own promise at the grave of Lazarus: 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' But, blessed be His name, miracle is not the highest manifestation of Christ's glory and of God's. The uniqueness of the revelation of Christ's glory in God does not depend upon the deeds which He wrought. For, as the context goes on to tell, the Word which tabernacled among us was 'full of grace and truth,' and therein is the glory most gloriously revealed.

The lambent light of stooping love that shone forth warning and attracting in His gentle life, and the clear white beam of unmingled truth that streamed from the radiant purity of Christ's life, revealed God to hearts that pine for love and spirits that hunger for truth, as no others of God's self-revealing works have done. And that revelation of the glory of God in the fulness of grace and truth is the highest possible revelation. For the divinest thing in God is love, and the true 'glory of God' is neither some symbolical flashing light nor the pomp of mere power and majesty; nor even those inconceivable and incommunicable attributes which we christen with names like Omnipotence and Omnipresence and Infinitude, and the like. These are all at the fringes of the brightness. The true central heart and lustrous light of the glory of God lie In His love, and of that glory Christ is the unique Representative and Revealer, because He is the only Begotten Son, and 'full of grace and truth.'

Thus the Word tabernacled amongst us. And though the Tabernacle to outward seeming was covered by curtains and skins that hid all the glowing splendour within; yet in that lowly life that was lived in the body of His humiliation, and knew our limitations and our weaknesses, 'the glory of the Lord was revealed; and all flesh hath seen it together' and acknowledged the divine Presence there.

Still further the Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. So in the tabernacle of His flesh Jesus offered up the one sacrifice for sins for ever. In the offering up of His human life in continuous obedience, and in the offering up of His body and blood in the bitter Passion of the Cross, He brought men nigh unto God.

Therefore, because of all these things, because the Tabernacle is the dwelling-place of God, the place of revelation, and the place of sacrifice, therefore, finally is it the meeting-place betwixt God and man. In the Old Testament it is always called by the name which our Revised Version has accurately substituted for 'tabernacle of the congregation,' namely 'tent of meeting.' The correctness of that rendering and the meaning of the name are established by several passages in the Old Testament, as for instance, 'There I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee, and there I will meet with the children of Israel.' So in Christ, who by His Incarnation lays His hand upon both, God touches man and man touches God. We who are afar off are made nigh, and in that 'true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man' we meet God and are glad.

'And so the word was flesh, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds.'

The temple for earth is 'the temple of His body.'

II. We have the Tabernacle for the Heavens.

In the context of our second passage we have a vision of the great multitude redeemed out of all nations and kindreds, 'standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.' The palms in their hands give important help towards understanding the vision. As has been often remarked, there are no heathen emblems in the Book of the Apocalypse. All its metaphors move within the circle of Jewish experiences and facts. So that we are not to think of the Roman palm of victory, but of the Jewish palm which was borne at the Feast of Tabernacles. What was the Feast of Tabernacles? A festival established on purpose to recall to the minds and to the gratitude of the Jews settled in their own land the days of their wandering in the wilderness. Part of the ritual of it was that during its celebration they builded for themselves booths or tabernacles of leaves and boughs of trees, under which they dwelt, thus reminding themselves of their nomad condition.

Now what beauty and power it gives to the word of my text, if we take in this allusion to the Jewish festival! The great multitude bearing the palms are keeping the feast, memorial of past wilderness wanderings; and 'He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle above them,' as the word might be here rendered. That is to say, He Himself shall build and be the tent in which they dwell; He Himself shall dwell with them in it. He Himself, in closer union than can be conceived of here, shall keep them company during that feast.

What a thought of that condition—the condition as I believe represented in this vision—of the spirits of the just made perfect, 'who wait for the adoption, to wit, the resurrection of the body,' is given us if we take this point of view to interpret the whole lovely symbolism. It is all a time of glad, grateful remembrance of the wilderness march. It is all a time in which festal joys shall be theirs, and the memory of the trials and the weariness and the

sorrow and the solitude that are past shall deepen to a more exquisite poignancy of delight, the rest and the fellowship and the felicity of that calm Presence, and God Himself shall spread His tent above them, lodge with them, and they with Him.

And so, dear brethren, rest in that assurance, that though we know so little of that state, we know this: 'Absent from the body, present with the Lord,' and that the happy company who bear the palms shall dwell in God, and God in them.

III. And now, lastly, look at that final vision which we have in these texts, which we may call the Tabernacle for the renewed earth.

I do not pretend to interpret the scenery and the setting of these Apocalyptic visions with dogmatic confidence, but it seems to me as if the emblems of this final vision coincide with dim hints in many other portions of Scripture; to the effect that some cosmical change having passed upon this material world in which we dwell, it, in some regenerated form, shall be the final abode of a regenerated and redeemed humanity. That, I think, is the natural interpretation of a great deal of Scriptural teaching.

For that highest condition there is set forth this as the all-sufficing light upon it. 'Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them.' The climax and the goal of all the divine working, and the long processes of God's love for, and discipline of, the world, are to be this, that He and men shall abide together in unity and concord. That is God's wish from the beginning. We read in one of the profound utterances of the Book of Proverbs how from of old the 'delights' of the Incarnate Wisdom which foreshadowed the Incarnate Word 'were with the sons of men.' And, at the close of all things, when the vision of this final chapter shall be fulfilled, God will say, settling Himself in the midst of a redeemed humanity, 'Lo! here will I dwell, for I have desired it. This is My rest for ever.' He will tabernacle with men, and men with Him.

We know not, and never shall know until experience strips the bandages from our eyes, what new methods of participation of the divine nature, and new possibilities of intimacy and intercourse with Him may be ours when the veils of flesh and sense and time have all dropped away. New windows may be opened in our spirits, from which we shall perceive new aspects of the divine character. New doors may be opened in our souls, from out of which we may pass to touch parts of His nature, all impalpable and inconceivable to us now. And when all the veils of a discordant moral nature are taken away, and we are pure, then we shall see, then we shall draw nigh to God. The thing that chiefly separates man from God is man's sin. When that is removed, the centrifugal force which kept our tiny orb apart from the great central sun being withdrawn, we shall, as it were, fall into the brightness and be one, not losing our sense of individuality, which would be to lose all the blessedness, but united with Him in a union far more intimate than earth can parallel. 'The Tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will tabernacle with them.'

Do not let us forget that this highest and ultimate hope that is held forth here, of the union and communion, perfect and perpetual, of humanity with God, does not sweep aside Jesus Christ. For through all eternity the Everlasting Word, the Christ who bears our nature in its glorified form, or, rather, whose nature in its glorified form we shall bear, is the Medium of Revelation, and the Medium of communication between man and God.

'I saw no Temple therein,' says this final vision of the Apocalypse, but 'God Almighty and the Lamb,' and these are the Temples thereof. Therefore through eternity God shall tabernacle with men, as He does tabernacle with us now through Him, in whom dwelleth as in its perennial habitation, 'all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

So we have the three tabernacles, for earth, for heaven, for the renewed earth; and these three, if I may say so, are like the triple division of that ancient Tabernacle in the wilderness: the Outer Court; the Holy Place; the Holiest of all. Let us enter into that outer court, and abide and commune with that God who comes near to us, revealing, forgiving, in the person of His Son, and then we shall pass from court to court, 'and go from strength to strength, until every one of us in Zion appear before God'; and enter into the Holiest of all, where 'within the veil' we shall receive splendours of revelation undreamed of here, and enjoy depths of communion to which the selectest moments of fellowship with God on earth are shallow and poor.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

'And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'—JOHN 1.16.

What a remarkable claim that is which the Apostle here makes for his Master! On the one side he sets His solitary figure as the universal Giver; on the other side are gathered the whole race of men, recipients from Him. As in the wilderness the children of Israel clustered round the rock from which poured out streams, copious enough for all the thirsty camp, John, echoing his Master's words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,' here declares 'Of *His* fulness have *all we* received.'

I. Notice, then, the one ever full Source.

The words of my text refer back to those of the fourteenth verse: 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.' 'And of His fulness have all we received.' The 'fulness' here seems to mean that of which the Incarnate Word was full, the 'grace and truth' which dwelt without measure in Him; the unlimited and absolute completeness and abundance of divine powers and glories which 'tabernacled' in Him. And so the language of my text, both verbally and really, is substantially equivalent to that of the Apostle Paul. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him.' The whole infinite Majesty, and inexhaustible resources of the divine nature, were incorporated and insphered in that Incarnate Word from whom all men may draw.

There are involved in that thought two ideas. One is the unmistakable assertion of the whole fulness of the divine nature as being in the Incarnate Word, and the other is that the whole fulness of the divine nature dwells in the Incarnate Word in order that men may get at it.

The words of my text go back, as I said, to the previous verse; but notice what an advance upon that previous verse they present to us. There we read, 'We beheld His glory.' To *behold* is much, but to *possess* is more. It is much to say that Christ comes to manifest God, but that is a poor, starved account of the purpose of His coming, if that is all you have to say. He comes to manifest Him. Yes! but He comes to communicate Him, not merely to dazzle us with a vision, not merely to show us Him as from afar, not merely to make Him known to understanding or to heart; but to bestow—in no mere metaphor, but in simple, literal fact—the absolute possession of the divine nature. 'We beheld His glory' is a reminiscence that thrills the Evangelist, though half a century has passed since the vision gleamed upon his eyes; but 'of His fulness have all we received' is infinitely and unspeakably more. And the manifestation was granted that the possession might be sure, for this is the very centre and heart of Christianity, that in Him who is Christianity God is not merely made known, but given; not merely beheld, but possessed.

In order that that divine fulness might belong to us there was needed that the Word should be made flesh; and there was further needed that incarnation should be crowned by sacrifice, and that life should be perfected in death. The alabaster box had to be broken before the house could be filled with the odour of the ointment. If I may so say, the sack, the

coarse-spun sack of Christ's humanity, had to be cut asunder in order that the wealth that was stored in it might be poured into our hands. God came near us in the life, but God became ours in the death, of His dear Son. Incarnation was needed for that great privilege—'we beheld His glory'; but the Crucifixion was needed in order to make possible the more wondrous prerogative: 'Of His fulness have all we received.' God gives Himself to men in the Christ whose life revealed and whose death imparted Him to the world.

And so He is the sole Source. All men, in a very real sense, draw from His fulness. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' The life of the body and the life of the spirit willing, knowing, loving, all which makes life into light, all comes to us through that everlasting Word of God. And when that Word has 'become flesh and dwelt among us,' His gifts are not only the gifts of light and life, which all men draw from Him, but the gifts of grace and truth which all those who love Him receive at His hands. His gifts, like the water from some fountain, may flow underground into many of the pastures of the wilderness; and many a man is blessed by them who knows not from whence they come. It is He from whom all the truth, all the grace which illuminates and blesses humanity, flow into all lands in all ages.

II. Consider, then, again, the many receivers from the one Source. 'Of His fulness have all we received.'

Observe, we are not told definitely what it is that we receive. If we refer back to words in a previous verse, they may put us on the right track for answering the question, What is it that we get? 'He came unto His own,' says verse 11, 'and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power,' etc. That answers the question, What do we receive? Christ is more than all His gifts. All His gifts are treasured up in Him and inseparable from Him. We get Jesus Christ Himself.

The blessings that we receive may be stated in many different ways. You may say we get pardon, purity, hope, joy, the prospect of Heaven, power for service; all these and a hundred more designations by which we might describe the one gift. All these are but the consequences of our having got the Christ within our hearts. He does not give pardon and the rest, as a king might give pardon and honours, a thousand miles off, bestowing it by a mere word, upon some criminal, but He gives all that He gives because He gives Himself. The real possession that we receive is neither more nor less than a loving Saviour, to enter our spirits and abide there, and be the spirit of our spirits, and the life of our lives.

Then, notice the universality of this possession. John has said, in the previous words, '*We* beheld His glory.' He refers there, of course, to the comparatively small circle of the eye-witnesses of our Master's life; who, at the time when he wrote, must have been very, very few in number. They had had the prerogative of seeing with their eyes and handling with their hands the Word of life that 'was manifested unto us'; and with that prerogative the duty of bearing witness of Him to the rest of men. But in the 'receiving,' John associates with himself, and with the other eyewitnesses, all those who had listened to their word, and had received the truth in the love of it. '*We beheld*' refers to the narrower circle; 'we *all* received' to the wider sweep of the whole Church. There is no exclusive class, no special prerogative. Every Christian man, the weakest, the lowliest, the most uncultured, rude, ignorant, foolish, the most besotted in the past, who has wandered furthest away from the

Master; whose spirit has been most destitute of all sparks of goodness and of God—receives from out of His fulness. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.' And every one of us, if we will, may have dwelling in our hearts, in the greatness of His strength, in the sweetness of His love, in the clearness of His illuminating wisdom, the Incarnate Word, the Comforter, the All-in-all whom 'we all receive.'

And, as I said, that word 'all' might have even a wider extension without going beyond the limits of the truth. For on the one side there stands Christ, the universal Giver; and grouped before Him, in all attitudes of weakness and of want, is gathered the whole race of mankind. And from Him there pours out a stream copious enough to supply all the necessities of every human soul that lives to-day, of every human soul that has lived in the past, of every one that shall live in the future. There is no limit to the universality except only the limit of the human will: 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Think of that solitary figure of the Christ reared up, as it were, before the whole race of man, as able to replenish all their emptiness with His fulness, and to satisfy all their thirst with His sufficiency. Dear brother! you have a great gaping void in your heart—an aching emptiness there, which you know better than I can tell you. Look to Him who can fill it and it shall be filled. He can supply all your wants as He can supply all the wants of every soul of man. And after generations have drawn from Him, the water will not have sunk one hairsbreadth in the great fountain, but there will be enough for all coming eternities as there has been enough for all past times. He is like His own miracle—the thousands are gathered on the grass, they do 'all eat and are filled.' As their necessities required the bread was multiplied, and at the last there was more left than there had seemed to be at the beginning. So 'of His fulness have all we received'; and after a universe has drawn from it, for an Eternity, the fulness is not turned into scantiness or emptiness.

III. And so, lastly, notice the continuous flow from the inexhaustible Source. 'Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'

The word 'for' is a little singular. Of course it means *instead of, in exchange for*; and the Evangelist's idea seems to be that as one supply of grace is given and used, it is, as it were, given back to the Bestower, who substitutes for it a fresh and unused vessel, filled with new grace. He might have said, grace *upon* grace; one supply being piled upon the other. But his notion is, rather, one supply given in substitution for the other, 'new lamps for old ones.'

Just as a careful gardener will stand over a plant that needs water, and will pour the water on the surface until the earth has drunk it up, and then add a little more; so He gives step by step, grace for grace, an uninterrupted bestowal, yet regulated according to the absorbing power of the heart that receives it. Underlying that great thought are two things: the continuous communication of grace, and the progressive communication of grace. We have here the continuous communication of grace. God is always pouring Himself out upon us in Christ. There is a perpetual out flow from Him to us: if there is not a perpetual inflow into us from Him it is our fault, and not His. He is always giving, and His intention is that our lives shall be a continual reception. Are they? How many Christian men there are whose Christian lives at the best are like some of those Australian or Siberian rivers; in the dry season, a pond here, a stretch of sand, waterless and barren there, then another place with a drop of muddy water in some hollow, and then another stretch of sand, and so on.

Why should not the ponds be linked together by a flashing stream? God is always pouring Himself out; why do we not always take Him in?

There is but one answer, and the answer is, that we do not fulfil the condition, which condition is simple faith. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believed on His name.' Faith is the condition of receiving, and wherever there is a continuous trust there will be an unbroken grace; and wherever there are interrupted gifts it is because there has been an intermitted trust in Him. Do not let your lives be like some dimly lighted road, with a lamp here, and a stretch of darkness, and then another twinkling light; let the light run all along the side of your path, because at every moment your heart is turning to Christ with trust. Make your faith continuous, and God will make His grace incessant, and out of His fulness you will draw continual supplies of needed strength.

But not only have we here the notion of continuous, but also, as it seems to me, of progressive gifts. Each measure of Christ received, if we use it aright, makes us capable of possessing more of Christ. And the measure of our capacity is the measure of His gift, and the more we can hold the more we shall get. The walls of our hearts are elastic, the vessel expands by being filled out; it throbs itself wider by desire and faith. The wider we open our mouths the larger will be the gift that God puts into them. Each measure and stage of grace utilised and honestly employed will make us capable and desirous, and, therefore, possessors, of more and more of the grace that He gives. So the ideal of the Christian life, and God's intention concerning us, is not only that we should have an uninterrupted, but a growing possession, of Christ and of His grace.

Is that the case with you, my friend? Can you hold more of God than you could twenty years ago? Is there any more capacity in your soul for more of Christ than there was long, long ago? If there is you have more of Him; if you have not more of Him it is because you cannot contain more; and you cannot contain more because you have not desired more, and because you have been so wretchedly unfaithful in your use of what you had. The ideal is, 'they go from strength to strength,' and the end of that is, 'every one of them appeareth before God.'

So, dear brother, as the dash of the waves will hollow out some little indentation on the coast, and make it larger and larger until there is a great bay, with its headlands miles apart, and its deep bosom stretching far into the interior, and all the expanse full of flashing waters and leaping waves, so the giving Christ works a place for Himself in a man's heart, and makes the spirit which receives and faithfully uses the gifts which He brings, capable of more of Himself, and fills the widened space with larger gifts and new grace.

Only remember the condition of having Him is trusting to His name and longing for His presence. 'If any man open the door I will come in.' We have Him if we trust Him. That trust is no mere passive reception, such as is the case with some empty jar which lies open-mouthed on the shore and lets the sea wash into it and out of it, as may happen. But the 'receive' of our text might be as truly rendered 'take.' Faith is an active taking, not a passive receiving. We must 'lay hold on eternal life.' Faith is the hand that grasps the offered gift, the mouth that feeds upon the bread of God, the voice that says to Christ, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord; why standest Thou without?' Such a faith alone brings us into vital

connection with Jesus. Without it, you will be none the richer for all His fulness, and may perish of famine in the midst of plenty, like a man dying of hunger outside the door of a granary. They who believe take the Saviour who is given, and they who take receive, and they who receive obtain day by day growing grace from the fulness of Christ, and so come ever nearer to the realisation of the ultimate purpose of the Father, that they should be 'filled with all the fulness of God.'

GRACE AND TRUTH

'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'—JOHN 1. 17.

There are scarcely any traces, in the writings of the Apostle John, of that great controversy as to the relation of the Law and the Gospel which occupied and embittered so much of the work of the Apostle Paul. We have floated into an entirely different region in John's writings. The old controversies are dead—settled, I suppose, mainly by Paul's own words, and also to a large extent by the logic of events. This verse is almost the only one in which John touches upon that extinct controversy, and here the Law is introduced simply as a foil to set off the brightness of the Gospel. All artists know the value of contrast in giving prominence. A dark background flashes up brighter colours into brilliancy. White is never so white as when it is relieved against black. And so here the special preciousness and distinctive peculiarities of what we receive in Christ are made more vivid and more distinct by contrast with what in old days 'was given by Moses.'

Every word in this verse is significant. 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' It was 'given'; they 'came.' Moses is contrasted with Christ. So we have a threefold antithesis as between Law and Gospel: in reference to their respective contents; in reference to the manner of their communication; and in reference to the person of their Founders. And I think, if we look at these three points, we shall get some clear apprehension of the glories of that Gospel which the Apostle would thereby commend to our affection and to our faith.

I. First of all, then, we have here the special glory of the contents of the Gospel heightened by the contrast with Law.

Law has no tenderness, no pity, no feeling. Tables of stone and a pen of iron are its fitting vehicles. Flashing lightnings and rolling thunders symbolise the fierce light which it casts upon men's duty and the terrors of its retribution. Inflexible, and with no compassion for human weakness, it tells us what we ought to be, but it does not help us to be it. It 'binds heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne,' upon men's consciences, but puts not forth 'the tip of a finger' to enable men to bear them. And this is true about law in all forms, whether it be the Mosaic Law, or whether it be the law of our own country, or whether it be the laws written upon men's consciences. These all partake of the one characteristic, that they help nothing to the fulfilment of their own behests, and that they are barbed with threatenings of retribution. Like some avenging goddess, law comes down amongst men, terrible in her purity, awful in her beauty, with a hard light in her clear grey eyes—in the one hand the tables of stone, bearing the commandments which we have broken, and in the other a sharp two-edged sword.

And this is the opposite of all that comes to us in the Gospel. The contrast divides into two portions. The 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' Let us look at these two in order.

What we have in Christ is not law, but grace. Law, as I said, has no heart; the meaning of the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands and demands; it says: 'This shalt thou do, or else—'; and it has nothing more that it can say. What is the use of standing

beside a lame man, and pointing to a shining summit, and saying to him, 'Get up there, and you will breathe a purer atmosphere'? He is lying lame at the foot of it. There is no help for any soul in law. Men are not perishing because they do not know what they ought to do. Men are not bad because they doubt as to what their duty is. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of what he ought to do than the best man in the world practises. So it is not for want of precepts that so many of us are going to destruction, but it is for want of power to fulfil the precepts.

Grace is love giving. Law demands, grace bestows. Law comes saying 'Do this,' and our consciences respond to the imperativeness of the obligation. But grace comes and says, 'I will help thee to do it.' Law is God requiring; grace is God bestowing. 'Give what Thou commandest, and then command what Thou wilt.'

Oh, brethren! we have all of us written upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts solemn commandments which we know are binding upon us; and which we sometimes would fain keep, but cannot. Is this not a message of hope and blessedness that comes to us? Grace has drawn near in Jesus Christ, and a giving God, who bestows upon us a life that will unfold itself in accordance with the highest law, holds out the fulness of His gift in that Incarnate Word. Law has no heart; the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands; grace is God bestowing Himself.

And still further, law condemns. Grace is love that bends down to an evildoer, and deals not on the footing of strict retribution with the infirmities and the sins of us poor weaklings. And so, seeing that no man that lives but hears in his heart an accusing voice, and that every one of us knows what it is to gaze upon lofty duties that we have shrunk from, upon plain obligations from the yoke of which we have selfishly and cowardly withdrawn our necks; seeing that every man, woman, and child listening to me now has, lurking in some corner of their hearts, a memory that only needs to be quickened to be a torture, and deeds that only need to have the veil drawn away from them to terrify and shame them—oh! surely it ought to be a word of gladness for every one of us that, in front of any law that condemns us, stands forth the gentle, gracious form of the Christ that brings pardon, and 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men.' Thank God! law needed to be 'given,' but it was only the foundation on which was to be reared a better thing. 'The law was given By Moses'—'a schoolmaster,' as conscience is to-day, 'to bring us to Christ' by whom comes the grace that loves, that stoops, that gives, and that pardons.

Still further, there is another antithesis here. The Gospel which comes by Christ is not law, but truth. The object of law is to regulate conduct, and only subordinately to inform the mind or to enlighten the understanding. The Mosaic Law had for its foundation, of course, a revelation of God. But that revelation of God was less prominent, proportionately, than the prescription for man's conduct. The Gospel is the opposite of this. It has for its object the regulation of conduct; but that object is less prominent, proportionately, than the other, the manifestation and the revelation of God. The Old Testament says 'Thou shalt'; the New Testament says 'God is.' The Old was Law; the New is Truth.

And so we may draw the inference, on which I do not need to dwell, how miserably inadequate and shallow a conception of Christianity that is which sets it forth as being mainly a means of regulating conduct, and how false and foolish that loose talk is that we

hear many a time.—'Never mind about theological subtleties; conduct is the main thing.' Not so. The Gospel is not law; the Gospel is truth. It is a revelation of God to the understanding and to the heart, in order that thereby the will may be subdued, and that then the conduct may be shaped and moulded. But let us begin where it begins, and let us remember that the morality of the New Testament has never long been held up high and pure, where the theology of the New Testament has been neglected and despised. 'The law came by Moses; truth came by Jesus Christ.'

But, still further, let me remind you that, in the revelation of a God who is gracious, giving to our emptiness and forgiving our sins—that is to say, in the revelation of grace—we have a far deeper, nobler, more blessed conception of the divine nature than in law. It is great to think of a righteous God, it is great and ennobling to think of One whose pure eyes cannot look upon sin, and who wills that men should live pure and noble and Godlike lives. But it is far more and more blessed, transcending all the old teaching, when we sit at the feet of the Christ who gives, and who pardons, and look up into His deep eyes, with the tears of compassion shining in them, and say: 'Lo! This is our God! We have waited for Him and He will save us.' That is a better truth, a deeper truth than prophets and righteous men of old possessed; and to us there has come, borne on the wings of the mighty angel of His grace, the precious revelation of the Father-God whose heart is love. 'The law was given by Moses,' but brighter than the gleam of the presence between the Cherubim is the lambent light of gentle tenderness that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. Grace, and therefore truth, a deeper truth, came by Him.

And, still further, let me remind you of how this contrast is borne out by the fact that all that previous system was an adumbration, a shadow and a premonition of the perfect revelation that was to come. Temple, priest, sacrifice, law, the whole body of the Mosaic constitution of things was, as it were, a shadow thrown along the road in advance by the swiftly coming King. The shadow fell before Him, but when He came the shadow disappeared. The former was a system of types, symbols, pictures. Here is the reality that antiquates and fulfils and transcends them all. 'The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

II. Now, secondly, look at the other contrast that is here, between giving and coming.

I do not know that I have quite succeeded in making clear to my own mind the precise force of this antithesis. Certainly there is a profound meaning if one can fathom it; perhaps one might put it best in something like the following fashion.

The word rendered 'came' might be more correctly translated 'became,' or 'came into being.' The law was *given*; grace and truth *came to be*.

Now, what do we mean when we talk about a law being given? We simply mean, I suppose, that it is promulgated, either in oral or in written words. It is, after all, no more than so many words. It is given when it is spoken or published. It is a verbal communication at the best. 'But grace and truth came to be.' They are realities; they are not words. They are not communicated by sentences, they are actual existences; and they spring into being as far as man's historical possession and experience of them are concerned—they spring into being in Jesus Christ, and through Him they belong to us all. Not that there was no grace, no manifest lore of God, in the world, nor any true knowledge

of Him before the Incarnation, but the earlier portions of this chapter remind us that all of grace, however restrained and partial, that all of truth, however imperfect and shadowy it may have been, which were in the world before Christ came, were owing to the operation of that Eternal Word 'Who became flesh and dwelt among us,' and that these, in comparison with the affluence and the fulness and the nearness of grace and truth after Christ's coming, were so small and remote that it is not an exaggeration to say that, as far as man's possession and experience of them are concerned, the giving love of God and the clear and true knowledge of His deep heart of tenderness and grace, sprang into being with the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ the Lord.

He comes to reveal by no words. His gift is not like the gift that Moses brought down from the mountain, merely a writing upon tables; His gift is not the letter of an outward commandment, nor the letter of an outward revelation. It is the thing itself which He reveals by being it. He does not speak about grace, He brings it; He does not show us God by His words, He shows us God by His acts. He does not preach about Him, but He lives Him, He manifests Him. His gentleness, His compassion, His miracles, His wisdom, His patience, His tears, His promises; all these are the very Deity in action before our eyes; and instead of a mere verbal revelation, which is so imperfect and so worthless, grace and truth, the living realities, are flashed upon a darkened world in the face of Jesus Christ. How cold, how hard, how superficial, in comparison with that fleshly table of the heart of Christ on which grace and truth were written, are the stony tables of law, which bore after all, for all their majesty, only words which are breath and nothing besides.

III. And so, lastly, look at the contrast that is drawn here between the persons of the Founders.

I do not suppose that we are to take into consideration the difference between the limitations of the one and the completeness of the other. I do not suppose that the Apostle was thinking about the difference between the reluctant service of the Lawgiver and the glad obedience of the Son; or between the passion and the pride that sometimes marred Moses' work, and the continual calmness and patient meekness that perfected the sacrifice of Jesus. Nor do I suppose that there flashed before his memory the difference between that strange tomb where God buried the prophet, unknown of men, in the stern solitude of the desert, true symbol of the solemn mystery and awful solitude with which the law which we have broken invests death, to our trembling consciences, and the grave in the garden with the spring flowers bursting round it, and visited by white-robed angels, who spoke comfort to weeping friends, true picture of what His death makes the grave for all His followers.

But I suppose he was mainly thinking of the contrast between the relation of Moses to his law, and of Christ to His Gospel. Moses was but a medium. His personality had nothing to do with his message. You may take away Moses, and the law stands all the same. But Christ is so interwoven with Christ's message that you cannot rend the two apart; you cannot have the figure of Christ melt away, and the gift that Christ brought remain. If you extinguish the sun you cannot keep the sunlight; if you put away Christ in the fulness of His manhood and of His divinity, in the power of His Incarnation and the omnipotence of His cross—if you put away Christ from Christianity, it collapses into dust and nothingness.

So, dear brethren, do not let any of us try that perilous experiment. You cannot melt away Jesus and keep grace and truth. You cannot tamper with His character, with His nature, with the mystery of His passion, with the atoning power of His cross, and preserve the blessings that He has brought to the world. If you want the grace which is the unveiling of the heart of God, the gift of a giving God and the pardon of a forgiving Judge; or if you want the truth, the reality of the knowledge of Him, you can only get them by accepting Christ. 'I *am* the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.' There *is* a 'law given which gives life,' and 'righteousness *is* by that law.' There is a Person who is the Truth, and our knowledge of the truth is through that Person, and through Him alone. By humble faith receive Him into your hearts, and He will come bringing to you the fulness of grace and truth.

THE WORLD'S SIN-BEARER

'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'—JOHN i. 29.

Our Lord, on returning from His temptation in the wilderness, came straight to John the Baptist. He was welcomed with these wonderful and rapturous words, familiarity with which has deadened our sense of their greatness. How audacious they would sound to some of their first hearers! Think of these two, one of them a young Galilean carpenter, to whom His companion witnesses and declares that He is of worldwide and infinite significance. It was the first public designation of Jesus Christ, and it throws into exclusive prominence one aspect of His work.

John the Baptist summing up the whole of former revelation which concentrated in Him, pointed a designating finger to Jesus and said, 'That is He!' My text is the sum of all Christian teaching ever since. My task, and that of all preachers, if we understand it aright, is but to repeat the same message, and to concentrate attention on the same fact—'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' It is the one thing needful for you, dear friend, to believe. It is the truth that we all need most of all. There is no reason for our being gathered together now, except that I may beseech you to behold for yourselves the Lamb of God which takes away the world's sin.

I. Now let me ask you to note, first, that Jesus Christ is the world's sin-bearer.

The significance of the first clause of my text, 'the Lamb of God,' is deplorably weakened if it is taken to mean only, or mainly, that Jesus Christ, in the sweetness of His human nature, is gentle and meek and patient and innocent and pure. It *does* mean all that, thank God! But it was no mere description of Christ's disposition which John the Baptist conceived himself to be uttering, as is clear by the words that follow in the next clause. His reason for selecting (under divine guidance, as I believe) that image of 'the Lamb of God,' went a great deal deeper than anything in the temper of the Person of whom he was speaking. Many streams of ancient prophecy and ritual converge upon this emblem, and if we want to understand what is meant by the designation 'the Lamb of God,' we must not content ourselves with the sentimentalisms which some superficial teachers have supposed to exhaust the significance of the expression; but we must submit to be led back by John, who was the summing up of all the ancient Revelation, to the sources in that Revelation from which he drew this metaphor.

First and chiefest of these, as I take it, are the words which no Jew ever doubted referred to the Messiah, until after He had come, and the Rabbis would not believe in Him, and so were bound to hunt up another interpretation—I mean the great words in the prophecy which, I suppose, is familiar to most of us, where there are found two representations, one, 'He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth'; and the other, still more germane to the purpose of my text, 'the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all…. By His knowledge shall He justify many, for He

shall bear their iniquities.' John the Baptist, looking back through the ages to that ancient prophetic utterance, points to the young Man standing by his side, and says, 'There it is fulfilled.'

But the prophetic symbol of the Lamb, and the thought that He bore the iniquity of the many, had their roots in the past, and pointed back to the sacrificial lamb, the lamb of the daily sacrifice, and especially to the lamb slain at the Passover, which was an emblem and sacrament of deliverance from bondage. Thus the conceptions of vicarious suffering, and of a death which is a deliverance, and of blood which, sprinkled on the doorposts, guards the house from the destroying angel, are all gathered into these words.

Nor do these exhaust the sources of this figure, as it comes from the venerable and sacred past. For when we read 'the Lamb *of God*,' who is there that does not recognise, unless his eyes are blinded by obstinate prejudice, a glance backward to that sweet and pathetic story when the father went up with his son to the top of Mount Moriah, and to the boy's question, 'Where is the lamb?' answered, 'My son, God Himself will provide the lamb!' John says, 'Behold the Lamb that God *has* provided, the Sacrifice, on whom is laid a world's sins, and who bears them away.'

Note, too, the universality of the power of Christ's sacrificial work. John does not say 'the *sins*,' as the Litany, following an imperfect translation, makes him say. But he says, 'the *sin* of the world,' as if the whole mass of human transgression was bound together, in one black and awful bundle, and laid upon the unshrinking shoulders of this better Atlas who can bear it all, and bear it all away. Your sin, and mine, and every man's, they were all laid upon Jesus Christ.

Now remember, dear brethren, that in this wondrous representation there lie, plain and distinct, two things which to me, and I pray they may be to you, are the very foundation of the Gospel to which we have to trust. One is that on Christ Jesus, in His life and in His death, were laid the guilt and the consequences of a world's sin. I do not profess to be ready with an explanation of how that is possible. That it is a fact I believe, on the authority of Christ Himself and of Scripture; that it is inconsistent with the laws of human nature may be asserted, but never can be proved. Theories manifold have been invented in order to make it plain. I do not know that any of them have gone to the bottom of the bottomless. But Christ in His perfect manhood, wedded, as I believe it is, to true divinity, is capable of entering into—not merely by sympathy, though that has much to do with it—such closeness of relation with human kind, and with every man, as that on Him can be laid the iniquity of us all.

Oh, brethren! what was the meaning of 'I have a baptism to be baptized with,' unless the cold waters of the flood into which He unshrinkingly stepped, and allowed to flow over Him, were made by the gathered accumulation of the sins of the whole world? What was the meaning of the agony in Gethsemane? What was the meaning of that most awful word ever spoken by human lips, in which the consciousness of union with, and of separation from, God, were so marvellously blended, 'My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?' unless the Guiltless was then loaded with the sins of the world, which rose between Him and God?

Dear friends, it seems to me that unless this transcendent element be fairly recognised as existing in the passion and death of Jesus Christ, His demeanour when He came to die was far less heroic and noble and worthy of imitation than have been the deaths of hundreds of people who drew all their strength to die from Him. I do not venture to bring a theory, but I press upon you the fact, He bears the sins of the world, and in that awful load are yours and mine.

There is the other truth here, as clearly, and perhaps more directly, meant by the selection of the expression in my text, that the Sin-bearer not only carries, but carries *away*, the burden that is laid upon Him. Perhaps there may be a reference—in addition to the other sources of the figure which I have indicated as existing in ritual, and prophecy, and history—there may be a reference in the words to yet another of the eloquent symbols of that ancient system which enshrined truths that were not peculiar to any people, but were the property of humanity. You remember, no doubt, the singular ceremonial connected with the scapegoat, and many of you will recall the wonderful embodiment of it given by the Christian genius of a modern painter. The sins of the nation were symbolically laid upon its head, and it was carried out to the edge of the wilderness and driven forth to wander alone, bearing away upon itself into the darkness and solitude—far from man and far from God—the whole burden of the nation's sins. Jesus Christ takes away the sin which He bears, and there is, as I believe, only one way by which individuals, or society, or the world at large, can thoroughly get rid of the guilt and penal consequences and of the dominion of sin, and that is, by beholding the Lamb of God that takes upon Himself, that He may carry away out of sight, the sin of the world. So much, then, for the first thought that I wish to suggest to you.

II. Now let me ask you to look with me at a second thought, that such a world's Sin-bearer is the world's deepest need.

The sacrifices of every land witness to the fact that humanity all over the world, and through all the ages, and under all varieties of culture, has been dimly conscious that its deepest need was that the fact of sin should be dealt with. I know that there are plenty of modern ingenious ways of explaining the universal prevalence of an altar and a sacrifice, and the slaying of innocent creatures, on other grounds, some of which I think it is not uncharitable to suppose are in favour mainly because they weaken this branch of the evidence for the conformity of Christian truth with human necessities. But notwithstanding these, I venture to affirm, with all proper submission to wiser men, that you cannot legitimately explain the universal prevalence of sacrifice, unless you take into account as one—I should say the main—element in it, this universally diffused sense that things are wrong between man and the higher Power, and need to be set right even by such a method.

But I do not need to appeal only to this world-wide fact as being a declaration of what man's deepest need is. I would appeal to every man's own consciousness—hard though it be to get at it; buried as it is, with some of us, under mountains of indifference and neglect; and callous as it is with many of us by reason of indulgence in habits of evil. I believe that in every one of us, if we will be honest, and give heed to the inward voice, there does echo a response and an amen to the Scripture declaration, 'God hath shut up all under sin.' I ask you about yourselves, is it not so? Do you not know that, however you may gloss over the thing, or forget it amidst a whirl of engagements and occupations, or try to divert your

thoughts into more or less noble or ignoble channels of pleasures and pursuits, there does lie, in each of our hearts, the sense, dormant often, but sometimes like a snake in its hybernation, waking up enough to move, and sometimes enough to sting—there does lie, in each of us, the consciousness that we are wrong with God, and need something to put us right?

And, brethren, let modern philanthropists of all sorts take this lesson: The thing that the world wants is to have sin dealt with—dealt with in the way of conscious forgiveness; dealt with in the way of drying up its source, and delivering men from the power of it. Unless you do that, I do not say you do nothing, but you pour a bottle full of cold water into Vesuvius, and try to put the fire out with that. You may educate, you may cultivate, you may refine; you may set political and economical arrangements right in accordance with the newest notions of the century, and what then? Why! the old thing will just begin over again, and the old miseries will appear again, because the old grandmother of them all is there, the sin that has led to them.

Now do not misunderstand me, as if I were warring against good and noble men who are trying to remedy the world's evils by less thorough methods than Christ's Gospel. They will do a great deal. But you may have high education, beautiful refinement of culture and manners; you may divide out political power in accordance with the most democratic notions; you may give everybody 'a living wage,' however extravagant his notions of a living wage may be. You may carry out all these panaceas and the world will groan still, because you have not dealt with the tap-root of all the mischief. You cannot cure an internal cancer with a plaster upon the little finger, and you will never stanch the world's wounds until you go to the Physician that has balm and bandage, even Jesus Christ, that takes away the sins of the world. I profoundly distrust all these remedies for the world's misery as in themselves inadequate, even whilst I would help them all, and regard them all as then blessed and powerful, when they are consequences and secondary results of the Gospel, the first task of which is to deal by forgiveness and by cleansing with individual transgression.

And if I might venture to go a step further, I would like to say that this aspect of our Lord's work on which John the Baptist concentrated all our attention is the only one which gives Him power to sway men, and which makes the Gospel—the record of His work—the kingly power in the world that it is meant to be. Depend upon it, that in the measure in which Christian teachers fail to give supreme importance to that aspect of Christ's work they fail altogether. There are many other aspects which, as I have just said, follow in my conception from this first one; but if, as is obviously the tendency in many quarters to-day, Christianity be thought of as being mainly a means of social improvement, or if its principles of action be applied to life without that basis of them all, in the Cross which takes away the world's iniquity, then it needs no prophet to foretell that such a Christianity will only have superficial effects, and that, in losing sight of this central thought, it will have cast away all its power.

I beseech you, dear brethren, remember that Jesus Christ is something more than a social reformer, though He is the first of them, and the only one whose work will last. Jesus Christ is something more than a lovely pattern of human conduct, though He is that. Jesus Christ is something more than a great religious genius who set forth the Fatherhood of God as it had never been set forth before. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the record not only of what He

said but of what He did, not only that He lived but that He died; and all His other powers, and all His other benefits and blessings to society, come as results of His dealing with the individual soul when He takes away its guilt and reconciles it to God.

III. And so, lastly, let me ask you to notice that this Sin-bearer of the world is our Sin-bearer if we 'behold' Him.

John was simply summoning ignorant eyes to look, and telling of what they would see. But his call is susceptible, without violence, of a far deeper meaning. This is really the one truth that I want to press upon you, dear friends—'Behold the Lamb of God!'

What is that beholding? Surely it is nothing else than our recognising in Him the great and blessed work which I have been trying to describe, and then resting ourselves upon that great Lord and sufficient Sacrifice. And such an exercise of simple trust is well named beholding, because they who believe do see, with a deeper and a truer vision than sense can give. You and I can see Christ more really than these men who stood round Him, and to whom His flesh was 'a veil'—as the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it—hiding His true divinity and work. They who thus behold by faith lack nothing either of the directness or of the certitude that belong to vision. 'Seeing is believing,' says the cynical proverb. The Christian version inverts its terms, 'Believing is seeing.' 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice.'

And your simple act of 'beholding,' by the recognition of His work and the resting of yourself upon it, makes the world's Sin-bearer your Sin-bearer. You appropriate the general blessing, like a man taking in a little piece of a boundless prairie for his very own. Your possession does not make my possession of Him less, for every eye gets its own beam, and however many eyes wait upon Him, they all receive the light on to their happy eyeballs. You can make Christ your own, and have all that He has done for the world as your possession, and can experience in your own hearts the sense of your own forgiveness and deliverance from the power and guilt of your own sin, on the simple condition of looking unto Jesus. The serpent is lifted on the pole, the dying camp cannot go to it, but the filming eyes of the man in his last gasp may turn to the gleaming image hanging on high; and as he looks the health begins to tingle back into his veins, and he is healed.

And so, dear brethren, behold Him; for unless you do, though He has borne the world's sin, your sin will not be there, but will remain on your back to crush you down. 'O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon *me*!'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: I. JOHN AND ANDREW

'And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? 39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.'—JOHN i. 37-39.

In these verses we see the head waters of a great river, for we have before us nothing less than the beginnings of the Christian Church. So simply were the first disciples made. The great society of believers was born like its Master, unostentatiously and in a corner.

Jesus has come back from His conflict in the wilderness after His baptism, and has presented Himself before John the Baptist for his final attestation. It was a great historical moment when the last of the Prophets stood face to face with the Fulfilment of all prophecy. In his words, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!' Jewish prophecy sang its swan-song, uttered its last rejoicing, 'Eureka! I have found Him!' and died as it spoke.

We do not sufficiently estimate the magnificent self-suppression and unselfishness of the Baptist, in that he, with his own lips, here repeats his testimony in order to point his disciples away from himself, and to attach them to Jesus. If he could have been touched by envy he would not so gladly have recognised it as his lot to decrease while Jesus increased. Bare magnanimity that in a teacher! The two who hear John's words are Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, and an anonymous man. The latter is probably the Evangelist. For it is remarkable that we never find the names of James and John in this Gospel (though from the other Gospels we know how closely they were associated with our Lord), and that we only find them referred to as 'the sons of Zebedee,' once near the close of the book. That fact points, I think, in the direction of John's authorship of this Gospel.

These two, then, follow behind Jesus, fancying themselves unobserved, not desiring to speak to Him, and probably with some notion of tracking Him to His home, in order that they may seek an interview at a later period. But He who notices the first beginnings of return to Him, and always comes to meet men, and is better to them than their wishes, will not let them steal behind Him uncheered, nor leave them to struggle with diffidence and delay. So He turns to them, and the events ensue which I have read in the verses that follow as my text.

We have, I think, three things especially to notice here. First, the Master's question to the whole world, 'What seek ye?' Second, the Master's invitation to the whole world, 'Come and see!' Lastly, the personal communion which brings men's hearts to Him, 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.'

I. So, then, first look at this question of Christ to the whole world, 'What seek ye?'

As it stands, on its surface, and in its primary application, it is the most natural of questions. Our Lord hears footsteps behind Him, and, as any one would do, turns about,

with the question which any one would ask, 'What is it that you want?' That question would derive all its meaning from the look with which it was accompanied, and the tone in which it was spoken. It might mean either annoyance and rude repulsion of a request, even before it was presented, or it might mean a glad wish to draw out the petition, and more than half a pledge to bestow it. All depends on the smile with which it was asked and the intonation of voice which carried it to their ears. And if we had been there we should have felt, as these two evidently felt, that though in form a question, it was in reality a promise, and that it drew out their shy wishes, made them conscious to themselves of what they desired, and gave them confidence that their desire would be granted. Clearly it had sunk very deep into the Evangelist's mind; and now, at the end of his life, when his course is nearly run, the never-to-be-forgotten voice sounds still in his memory, and he sees again, in sunny clearness, all the scene that had transpired on that day by the fords of the Jordan. The first words and the last words of those whom we have learned to love are cut deep on our hearts.

It was not an accident that the first words which the Master spoke in His Messianic office were this profoundly significant question, 'What seek ye?' He asks it of us all, He asks it of us to-day. Well for them who can answer, 'Rabbi! where dwellest *Thou*?' 'It is Thou whom we seek!' So, venturing to take the words in that somewhat wider application, let me just suggest to you two or three directions in which they seem to point.

First, the question suggests to us this: the need of having a clear consciousness of what is our object in life. The most of men have never answered that question. They live from hand to mouth, driven by circumstances, guided by accidents, impelled by unreflecting passions and desires, knowing what they want for the moment, but never having tried to shape the course of their lives into a consistent whole, so as to stand up before God in Christ when He puts the question to them, 'What seek ye?' and to answer the question.

These incoherent, instinctive, unreflective lives that so many of you are living are a shame to your manhood, to say nothing more. God has made us for something else than that we should thus be the sport of circumstances. It is a disgrace to any of us that our lives should be like some little fishing-boat, with an unskilful or feeble hand at the tiller, yawing from one point of the compass to another, and not keeping a straight and direct course. I pray you, dear brethren, to front this question: 'After all, and at bottom, what is it I am living for? Can I formulate the aims and purposes of my life in any intelligible statement of which I should not be ashamed?' Some of you are not ashamed to do what you would be very much ashamed to say, and you practically answer the question, 'What are you seeking?' by pursuits that you durst not call by their own ugly names.

There may be many of us who are living for our lusts, for our passions, for our ambitions, for avarice, who are living in all uncleanness and godlessness. I do not know. There are plenty of shabby, low aims in all of us which do not bear being dragged out into the light of day. I beseech you to try and get hold of the ugly things and bring them up to the surface, however much they may seek to hide in the congenial obscurity and twist their slimy coils round something in the dark. If you dare not put your life's object into words, bethink yourselves whether it ought to be your life's object at all.

Ah, brethren! if we would ask ourselves this question, and answer it with any thoroughness, we should not make so many mistakes as to the places where we look for the things for which we are seeking. If we knew what we were really seeking, we should know where to go to look for it. Let me tell you what you are seeking, whether you know it or not. You are seeking for rest for your heart, a home for your spirits; you are seeking for perfect truth for your understandings, perfect beauty for your affections, perfect goodness for your conscience. You are seeking for all these three, gathered into one white beam of light, and you are seeking for it all in a Person. Many of you do not know this, and so you go hunting in all manner of impossible places for that which you can only find in one. To the question, 'What seek ye?' the deepest of all answers, the only real answer, is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' If you know that, you know where to look for what you need! 'Do men gather grapes of thorns?' If these are really the things that you are seeking after, in all your mistaken search—oh! how mistaken is the search! Do men look for pearls in cockle-shells, or for gold in coal-pits; and why should you look for rest of heart, mind, conscience, spirit, anywhere and in anything short of God? 'What seek ye?'—the only answer is, 'We seek *Thee*!'

And then, still further, let me remind you how these words are not only a question, but are really a veiled and implied promise. The question, 'What do you want of Me?' may either strike an intending suppliant like a blow, and drive him away with his prayer sticking in his throat unspoken, or it may sound like a merciful invitation, 'What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted unto thee?' We know which of the two it was here. Christ asks all such questions as this (and there are many of them in the New Testament), not for His information, but for our strengthening. He asks people, not because He does not know before they answer, but that, on the one hand, their own minds may be clear as to their wishes, and so they may wish the more earnestly because of the clearness; and that, on the other hand, their desires being expressed, they may be the more able to receive the gift which He is willing to bestow. So He here turns to these men, whose purpose He knew well enough, and says to them, 'What seek ye?' Herein He is doing the very same thing on a lower level, and in an outer sphere, as is done when He appoints that we shall pray for the blessings which He is yearning to bestow, but which He makes conditional on our supplications, only because by these supplications our hearts are opened to a capacity for receiving them.

We have, then, in the words before us, thus understood, our Lord's gracious promise to give what is desired on the simple condition that the suppliant is conscious of his own wants, and turns to Him for the supply of them. 'What seek ye?' It is a blank cheque that He puts into their hands to fill up. It is the key of His treasure-house which He offers to us all, with the assured confidence that if we open it we shall find all that we need.

Who is He that thus stands up before a whole world of seeking, restless spirits, and fronts them with the question which is a pledge, conscious of His capacity to give to each of them what each of them requires? Who is this that professes to be able to give all these men and women and children bread here in the wilderness? There is only one answer—the Christ of God.

And He has done what He promises. No man or woman ever went to Him, and answered this question, and presented their petition for any real good, and was refused. No man can

ask from Christ what Christ cannot bestow. No man can ask from Christ what Christ will not bestow. In the loftiest region, the region of inward and spiritual gifts, which are the best gifts, we can get everything that we want, and our only limit is, not His boundless omnipotence and willingness, but our own poor, narrow, and shrivelled desires. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.'

Christ stands before us, if I may so say, like some of those fountains erected at some great national festival, out of which pour for all the multitude every variety of draught which they desire, and each man that goes with his empty cup gets it filled, and gets it filled with that which he wishes. 'What seek ye?' Wisdom? You students, you thinkers, you young men that are fighting with intellectual difficulties and perplexities, 'What seek ye?' Truth? He gives us that. You others, 'What seek ye?' Love, peace, victory, self-control, hope, anodyne for sorrow? Whatever you desire, you will find in Jesus Christ. The first words with which He broke the silence when He spake to men as the Messias, were at once a searching question, probing their aims and purposes, and a gracious promise pledging Him to a task not beyond His power, however far beyond that of all others, even the task of giving to each man his heart's desire. 'What seek ye?' 'Seek, and ye shall find.'

II. Then, still further, notice how, in a similar fashion, we may regard here the second words which our Lord speaks as being His merciful invitation to the world. 'Come and see.'

The disciples' answer was simple and timid. They did not venture to say, 'May we talk to you?' 'Will you take us to be your disciples?' All they can muster courage to ask now is, 'Where dwellest Thou?' At another time, perhaps, we will go to this Rabbi and speak with Him. His answer is, 'Come, come now; come, and by intercourse with Me learn to know Me.' His temporary home was probably nothing more than some selected place on the river's bank, for 'He had not where to lay His head'; but such as it was, He welcomes them to it. 'Come and see!'

Take a plain, simple truth out of that. Christ is always glad when people resort to Him. When He was here in the world, no hour was inconvenient or inopportune; no moment was too much occupied; no physical wants of hunger, or thirst, or slumber were ever permitted to come between Him and seeking hearts. He was never impatient. He was never wearied of speaking, though He was often wearied in speaking. He never denied Himself to any one or said, 'I have something else to do than to attend to you.' And just as in literal fact, whilst He was here upon earth, nothing was ever permitted to hinder His drawing near to any man who wanted to draw near to Him, so nothing now hinders it; and He is glad when any of us resort to Him and ask Him to let us speak to Him and be with Him. His weariness or occupation never shut men out from Him then. His glory does not shut them out now.

Then there is another thought here. This invitation of the Master is also a very distinct call to a firsthand knowledge of Jesus Christ. Andrew and John had heard from the Baptist about Him, and now what He bids them to do is to come and hear Himself. That is what He calls you, dear brethren, to do. Do not listen to us, let the Master Himself speak to you. Many who reject Christianity reject it through not having listened to Jesus Himself teaching them, but only to theologians and other human representations of the truth. Go and ask Christ to speak to you with His own lips of truth, and take Him as the Expositor of His own

system. Do not be contented with traditional talk and second-hand information. Go to Christ, and hear what He Himself has to say to you.

Then, still further, in this 'Come and see' there is a distinct call to the personal act of faith. Both of these words, '*come*' and '*see*,' are used in the New Testament as standing emblems of faith. Coming to Christ is trusting Him; trusting Him is seeing Him, looking unto Him. 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.' There are two metaphors, both of them pointing to one thing, and that one thing is the invitation from the dear lips of the loving Lord to every man, woman, and child in this congregation. 'Come and see!' 'Put your trust in Me, draw near to Me by desire and penitence, draw near to Me in the fixed thought of your mind, in the devotion of your will, in the trust of your whole being. Come to Me, and see Me by faith; and then—and then—your hearts will have found what they seek, and your weary quest will be over, and, like the dove, you will fold your wings and nestle at the foot of the Cross, and rest for evermore. Come! "Come and see!"'

III. So, lastly, we have in these words a parable of the blessed experience which binds men's hearts to Jesus for ever. 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.'

'Dwelt' and 'abode' are the same words in the original. It is one of John's favourite words, and in its deepest meaning expresses the close, still communion which the soul may have with Jesus Christ, which communion, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, when he and Andrew sat with Him in the quiet, confidential fellowship that disclosed Christ's glory 'full of grace and truth' to their hearts, made them His for ever.

If the reckoning of time here is made according to the Hebrew fashion, the 'tenth hour' will be ten o'clock in the morning. So, one long day of talk! If it be according to the Roman legal fashion, the hour will be four o'clock in the afternoon, which would only give time for a brief conversation before the night fell. But, in any case, sacred reserve is observed as to what passed in that interview. A lesson for a great deal of blatant talk, in this present day, about conversion and the details thereof!

'Not easily forgiven
Are those, who setting wide the doors, that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart.
Let in the day.'

John had nothing to say to the world about what the Master said to him and his brother in that long day of communion.

One plain conclusion from this last part of our narrative is that the impression of Christ's own personality is the strongest force to make disciples. The character of Jesus Christ is, after all, the central and standing evidence and the mightiest credential of Christianity. It bears upon its face the proof of its own truthfulness. If such a character was not lived, how did it ever come to be described, and described by such people? And if it was lived, how did it come to be so? The historical veracity of the character of Jesus Christ is guaranteed by its very uniqueness. And the divine origin of Jesus Christ is forced upon us as the only adequate explanation of His historical character. 'Truly this man was the Son of God.'

I believe that to lift Him up is the work of all Christian preachers and teachers; as far as they can to hide themselves behind Jesus Christ, or at the most to let themselves appear, just as the old painters used to let their own likenesses appear in their great altar-pieces—a little kneeling figure there, away in a dark corner of the background. Present Christ, and He will vindicate His own character; He will vindicate His own nature; He will vindicate His own gospel. 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him,' and the end of it was that they abode with Him for evermore. And so it will always be.

Once more, personal experience of the grace and sweetness of this Saviour binds men to Him as nothing else will:

'He must be loved ere that to you
He will seem worthy of your love.'

The deepest and sweetest and most precious part of His character and of His gifts can only be known on condition of possessing Him and them, and they can be possessed only on condition of holding fellowship with Him. I do not say to any man: 'Try trust in order to be sure that Jesus Christ is worthy to be trusted,' for by its very nature faith cannot be an experiment or provisional. I do not say that my experience is evidence to you, but at the same time I do say that it is worth any man's while to reflect upon this, that none who ever trusted in Him have been put to shame. No man has looked to Jesus and has said: 'Ah! I have found Him out! His help is vain, His promises empty.' Many men have fallen away from Him, I know, but not because they have proved Him untruthful, but because they have become unfaithful.

And so, dear brethren, I come to you with the old message, 'Oh! taste,' and thus you will 'see that the Lord is good.' There must be the faith first, and then there will be the experience, which will make anything seem to you more credible than that He whom you have loved and trusted, and who has answered your love and your trust, should be anything else than the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. Come to Him and you will see. The impregnable argument will be put into your mouth—'Whether this man be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' Look to Him, listen to Him, and when He asks you, 'What seek ye?' answer, 'Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? It is Thou whom I seek.' He will welcome you to close blessed intercourse with Him, which will knit you to Him with cords that cannot be broken, and with His loving voice making music in memory and heart, you will be able triumphantly to confess—'Now we believe, not because of any man's saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: II. SIMON PETER

'One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.'—JOHN i. 40-42.

There are many ways by which souls are brought to their Saviour. Sometimes, like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, men seek Him earnestly and find Him. Sometimes, by the intervention of another, the knowledge of Him is kindled in dark hearts. Sometimes He Himself takes the initiative, and finds those that seek Him not. We have illustrations of all these various ways in these simple records of the gathering in of the first disciples. Andrew and his friend, with whom we were occupied in our last sermon, looked for Christ and found Him. Peter, with whom we have to do now, was brought to Christ by his brother; and the third of the group, consisting of Philip, was sought by Christ while he was not thinking of Him, and found an unsought treasure; and then Philip again, like Andrew, finds a friend, and brings him to Christ.

Each of the incidents has its own lesson, and each of them adds something to the elucidation of John's two great subjects: the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, and the development of that faith in Him which gives us life. It may be profitable to consider each group in succession, and mark the various aspects of these two subjects presented by each.

In this incident, then, we have two things mainly to consider: first, the witness of the disciple; second, the self-revelation of the Master.

I. The witness of the disciple.

We have seen that the unknown companion of Andrew was probably the Evangelist himself, who, in accordance with his uniform habit, suppresses his own name, and that that omission points to John's authorship of this Gospel. Another morsel of evidence as to the date and purpose of the Gospel lies in the mention here of Andrew as 'Simon Peter's brother.' We have not yet heard anything about Simon Peter. The Evangelist has never mentioned his name, and yet he takes it for granted that his hearers knew all about Peter, and knew him better than they did Andrew. That presupposes a considerable familiarity with the incidents of the Gospel story, and is in harmony with the theory that this fourth Gospel is the latest of the four, and was written for the purpose of supplementing, not of repeating, their narrative. Hence a number of the phenomena of the Gospel, which have troubled critics, are simply and sufficiently explained.

But that by the way. Passing that, notice first the illustration that we get here of how instinctive and natural the impulse is, when a man has found Jesus Christ, to tell some one else about Him. Nobody said to Andrew, 'Go and look for your brother,' and yet, as soon as he had fairly realised the fact that this Man standing before him was the Messiah, though

the evening seems to have come, he hurries away to find his brother, and share with him the glad conviction.

Now, that is always the case. If a man has any real depth of conviction, he cannot rest till he tries to share it with somebody else. Why, even a dog that has had its leg mended, will bring other limping dogs to the man that was kind to it. Whoever really believes anything becomes a propagandist.

Look round about us to-day! and hearken to the Babel, the wholesale Babel of noises, where every sort of opinion is trying to make itself heard. It sounds like a country fair where every huckster is shouting his loudest. That shows that the men believe the things that they profess. Thank God that there is so much earnestness in the world! And now are Christians to be dumb whilst all this vociferous crowd is calling its wares, and quacks are standing on their platforms shouting out their specifics, which are mostly delusions? Have you not a medicine that will cure everything, a real heal-all, a veritable pain-killer? If you believe that you have, certainly you will never rest till you share your boon with your brethren.

If the natural effect of all earnest conviction, viz. a yearning and an absolute necessity to speak it out, is no part of your Christian experience, very grave inferences ought to be drawn from that. This man, before he was four-and-twenty hours a disciple, had made another. Some of you have been disciples for as many years, and have never even tried to make one. Whence comes that silence which is, alas, so common among us?

It is very plain that, making all allowance for changed manners, for social difficulties, for timidity, for the embarrassment that besets people when they talk to other people about religion, which is 'such an awkward subject to introduce into mixed company,' and the like,—making all allowance for these, there is a deplorable number of Christian people who ought to be, in their own circles, evangelists and missionaries, who are, if I may venture to quote very rude words which the Bible uses, 'Dumb dogs lying down, and loving to slumber.' 'He first findeth his own brother, Simon!'

Now, take another lesson out of this witness of the disciple, as to the channel in which such effort naturally runs. 'He *first* findeth *his own brother*'; does not that imply a second finding by the other of the two? The language of the text suggests that the Evangelist's tendency to the suppression of himself, of which I have spoken, hides away, if I may so say, in this singular expression, the fact that he too went to look for a brother, but that Andrew found his brother before John found his. If so, each of the original pair of disciples went to look for one who was knit to him by close ties of kindred and affection, and found him and brought him to Christ; and before the day was over the Christian Church was doubled, because each member of it, by God's grace, had added another. Home, then, and those who are nearest to us, present the natural channels for Christian work. Many a very earnest and busy preacher, or Sunday-school teacher, or missionary, has brothers and sisters, husband or wife, children or parents at home to whom he has never said a word about Christ. There is an old proverb, 'The shoemaker's wife is always the worst shod.' The families of many very busy Christian teachers suffer wofully for want of remembering 'he first findeth his own brother.' It is a poor affair if all your philanthropy and Christian energy go off noisily in Sunday-schools and mission-stations, and if your own vineyard is neglected, and the people

at your own fireside never hear anything from you about the Master whom you say you love. Some of you want that hint; will you take it?

But then, the principle is one that might be fairly expanded beyond the home circle. The natural relationships into which we are brought by neighbourhood and by ordinary associations prescribe the direction of our efforts. What, for instance, are we set down in this swarming population of Lancashire for? For business and personal ends? Yes, partly. But is that all? Surely, if we believe that 'there is a divinity that shapes our ends' and determines the bounds of our habitation, we must believe that other purposes affecting other people are also meant by God to be accomplished through us, and that where a man who knows and loves Christ Jesus is brought into neighbourly contact with thousands who do not, he is thereby constituted his brethren's keeper, and is as plainly called to tell them of Christ as if a voice from Heaven had bid him do it. What is to be said of the depth and vital energy of the Christianity that neither hears the call nor feels the impulse to share its blessing with the famishing Lazarus at its gate? What will be the fate of such a church? Why, if you live in luxury in your own well drained and ventilated house, and take no heed to the typhoid fever or cholera in the slums at its back, the chances are that seeds of the disease will find their way to you, and kill your wife, or child, or yourself. And if you Christian people, living in the midst of godless people, do not try to heal them, they will infect you. If you do not seek to impress your conviction that Christ is the Messiah upon an unbelieving generation, the unbelieving generation will impress upon you its doubts whether He is; and your lips will falter, and a pallor will come over the complexion of your love, and your faith will become congealed and turn into ice.

Notice again the simple word which is the most powerful means of influencing most men.

Andrew did not begin to argue with his brother. Some of us can do that and some of us cannot. Some of us are influenced by argument and some of us are not. You may pound a man's mistaken creed to atoms with sledge-hammers of reasoning, and he is not much the nearer being a Christian than he was before; just as you may pound ice to pieces and it is pounded ice after all. The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion in us at all, is that of Andrew, 'We have found the Messias.'

I recently read a story in some newspaper or other about a minister who preached a very elaborate course of lectures in refutation of some form of infidelity, for the special benefit of a man that attended his place of worship. Soon after, the man came and declared himself a Christian. The minister said to him, 'Which of my discourses was it that removed your doubts?' The reply was, 'Oh! it was not any of your sermons that influenced me. The thing that set me thinking was that a poor woman came out of the chapel beside me, and stumbled on the steps, and I stretched out my hand to help her, and she said "Thank you!" Then she looked at me and said, "Do you love Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour?" And I did not, and I went home and thought about it; and now I can say *I* love Jesus.' The poor woman's word, and her frank confession of her experience, were all the transforming power.

If you have found Christ, you can say that you have. Never mind about the how! Any how! Only say it! A boy that is sent on an errand by his father has only one duty to perform, and

that is to repeat what he was told. Whether we have any eloquence or not, whether we have any logic or not, whether we can speak persuasively and gracefully or not, if we have laid hold of Christ at all we can say that we have; and it is at our peril that we do not. We can say it to somebody. There is surely some one who will listen to you more readily than to any one else. Surely you have not lived all your life and bound nobody to you by kindness and love, so that they will gladly attend to what you say. Well, then, *use* the power that is given to you.

Remember the beginnings of the Christian Church—two men, each of whom found his brother. Two and two make four; and if every one of us would go, according to the old law of warfare, and each of us slay our man, or rather each of us give life by God's grace to some one, or try to do it, our congregations and our churches would grow as fast as, according to the old problem, the money grew that was paid down for the nails in the horse's shoes. Two snowflakes on the top of a mountain gather an avalanche by the time they reach the valley. 'He first findeth his brother, Simon.'

II. And now I turn to the second part of this text, the self-revelation of the Master.

The bond which knit these men to Christ at first was by no means the perfect Christian faith which they afterwards attained. They recognised Him as the Messiah, they were personally attached to Him, they were ready to accept His teaching and to obey His commandments. That was about as far as they had gone. But they were scholars. They had entered the school. The rest would come. It would be absurd to expect that Christ would begin by preaching to them faith in His divinity and atoning work. He binds them to *Himself*. That is lesson enough for a beginner for one day.

It was the impression which Christ Himself made on Simon which completed the work begun by his brother. What, then, was the impression? He comes all full of wonder and awe, and he is met by a look and a sentence. The look, which is described by an unusual word, was a penetrating gaze which regarded Peter with fixed attention. It must have been remarkable, to have lived in John's memory for all these years. Evidently, as I think, a more than natural insight is implied. So, also, the saying with which our Lord received Peter seems to me to be meant to show more than natural knowledge: 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas.' Christ may, no doubt, have learned the Apostle's name and lineage from his brother, or in some other ordinary way. But if you observe the similar incident which follows in the conversation with Nicodemus, and the emphatic declaration of the next chapter that Jesus knew both 'all men,' and 'what was in man'—both human nature as a whole, and each individual—it is more natural to see here superhuman knowledge.

So then, the first point in our Lord's self-revelation here is that He shows Himself possessed of supernatural and thorough knowledge. One remembers the many instances where our Lord read men's hearts, and the prayer addressed to Him probably, by Peter, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,' and the vision which John saw of 'eyes like a flame of fire,' and the sevenfold 'I know thy works.'

It may be a very awful thought, 'Thou, God, seest me.' It is a very unwelcome thought to a great many men, and it will be so to us unless we can give it the modification which it receives from the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and feel sure that the eyes which are blazing with divine omniscience are dewy with divine and human love.

Do you believe it? Do you feel that Christ is looking at you, and searching you altogether? Do you rejoice in it? Do you carry it about with you as a consolation and a strength in moments of weakness and in times of temptation? Is it as blessed to you to feel 'Thou Christ beholdest me now,' as it is for a child to feel that, when it is playing in the garden, its mother is sitting up at the window watching it, and that no harm can come? There have been men driven mad in prisons because they knew that somewhere in the wall there was a little pinhole, through which a gaoler's eye was always, or might be always, glaring down at them. And the thought of an absolute Omniscience up there, searching me to the depths of my nature, may become one from which I recoil shudderingly, and will not be altogether a blessed one unless it comes to me in this shape:—'My Christ knows me altogether and loves me better than He knows. And so I will spread myself out before Him, and though I feel that there is much in me which I dare not tell to men, I will rejoice that there is nothing which I need to tell to Him. He knows me through and through. He knew me when He died for me. He knew me when He forgave me. He knew me when He undertook to cleanse me. Like this very Peter I will say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things," and, like him, I will cling the closer to His feet, because I know, and He knows, my weakness and my sin.'

Another revelation of our Lord's relation to His disciples is given in the fact that He changes Simon's name. Jehovah, in the Old Testament, changes the names of Abraham and of Jacob. Babylonian kings in the Old Testament change the names of their vassal princes. Masters impose names on their slaves; and I suppose that even the marriage custom of the wife's assuming the name of the husband rests originally upon the same idea of absolute authority. That idea is conveyed in the fact that our Lord changes Peter's name, and so takes absolute possession of him, and asserts His mastery over him. We belong to Him altogether, because He has given Himself altogether for us. His absolute authority is the correlative of His utter self-surrender. He who can come to me and say, 'I have spared not my life for thee,' and He only, has the right to come to me and say, 'yield yourself wholly to Me.' So, Christian friends, your Master wants all your service; do you give yourselves up to Him out and out, not by half and half.

Lastly, that change of name implies Christ's power and promise to bestow a new character and new functions and honours. Peter was by no means a 'Peter' then. The name no doubt mainly implies official function, but that official function was prepared for by personal character; and in so far as the name refers to character, it means firmness. At that epoch Peter was rash, impulsive, headstrong, self-confident, vain, and therefore, necessarily changeable. Like the granite, all fluid and hot, and fluid because it was hot, he needed to cool in order to solidify into rock. And not until his self-confidence had been knocked out of him, and he had learned humility by falling; not until he had been beaten from all his presumption, and tamed down, and sobered and steadied by years of difficulty and responsibilities, did he become the rock that Christ meant him to be. All *that* lay concealed in the future, but in the change of his name, while he stood on the very threshold of his Christian career, there was preached to him, and there is preached to us, this great truth, that if you will go to Jesus Christ He will make a new man of you. No man's character is so obstinately rooted in evil but that Christ can change its set and direction. No man's natural dispositions are so faulty and low but that Christ can develop counterbalancing virtues, and out of the evil and weakness make strength. He will not make a Peter into a

John, or a John into a Paul, but He will deliver Peter from the 'defects of his qualities,' and lead them up into a higher and a nobler region. There are no outcasts in the view of the transforming Christ. He dismisses no people out of His hospital as incurable, because anybody, everybody, the blackest, the most rooted in evil, those who have longest indulged in any given form of transgression, may all come to Him; with the certainty that if they will cleave to Him, He will read all their character and all its weaknesses, and then with a glad smile of welcome and assured confidence on His face, will ensure to them a new nature and new dignities. 'Thou art Simon—thou shalt be Peter.'

The process will be long. It will be painful. There will be a great deal pared off. The sculptor makes the marble image by chipping away the superfluous marble. Ah! and when you have to chip away superfluous flesh and blood it is bitter work, and the chisel is often deeply dyed in gore, and the mallet seems to be very cruel. Simon did not know all that had to be done to make a Peter of him. We have to thank God's providence that we do not know all the sorrows and trials of the process of making us what He wills us to be. But we may be sure of this, that if only we keep near our Master, and let Him have His way with us, and work His will upon us, and if only we will not wince from the blows of the Great Artist's chisel, then out of the roughest block He will carve the fairest statue; and He will fulfil for us at last His great promise: 'I will give unto him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: III. PHILIP

'The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.'—JOHN i. 43.

'The day following'—we have a diary in this chapter and the next, extending from the day when John the Baptist gives his official testimony to Jesus, up till our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem. The order of events is this. The deputation from the Sanhedrim to John occupied the first day. On the second Jesus comes back to John after His temptation, and receives his solemn attestation. On the third day, John repeats his testimony, and three disciples, probably four, make the nucleus of the Church. These are the two pairs of brothers, James and John, Andrew and Peter, who stand first in every catalogue of the Apostles, and were evidently nearest to Christ.

'The day following' of our text is the fourth day. On it our Lord determines to return to Galilee. His objects in His visit to John were accomplished—to receive his public attestation, and to gather the first little knot of His followers. Thus launched upon His course, He desired to return to His native district.

These events had occurred where John was baptising, in a place called in the English version Bethabara, which means 'The house of crossing,' or as we might say, Ferry-house. The traditional site for John's baptism is near Jericho, but the next chapter (verse i.) shows that it was only a day's journey from Cana of Galilee, and must therefore have been much further north than Jericho. A ford, still bearing the name Abarah, a few miles south of the lake of Gennesaret, has lately been discovered. Our Lord, then, and His disciples had a day's walking to take them back to Galilee. But apparently before they set out on that morning, Philip and Nathanael were added to the little band. So these two days saw six disciples gathered round Jesus.

Andrew and John sought Christ and found Him. To them He revealed Himself as very willing to be approached, and glad to welcome any to His side. Peter, who comes next, was brought to Christ by his brother, and to him Christ revealed Himself as reading his heart, and promising and giving him higher functions and a more noble character.

Now we come to the third case, 'Jesus findeth Philip,' who was not seeking Jesus, and who was brought by no one. To him Christ reveals Himself as drawing near to many a heart that has not thought of Him, and laying a masterful hand of gracious authority on the springs of life and character in that autocratic word 'Follow Me.' So we have a gradually heightening revelation of the Master's graciousness to all souls, to them that seek and to them that seek Him not. It is only to the working out of these simple thoughts that I ask your attention now.

I. First, then, let us deal with the revelation that is given us here of the seeking Christ.

Every one who reads this chapter with even the slightest attention must observe how 'seeking' and 'finding' are repeated over and over again. Christ turns to Andrew and John with the question, 'What *seek* ye?' Andrew, as the narrative says, '*findeth* his own brother,

Simon, and saith unto him, "We have *found* the Messias!"' Then again, Jesus *finds* Philip; and again, Philip, as soon as he has been won to Jesus, goes off to *find* Nathanael; and his glad word to him is, once more, 'We have *found* the Messias.' It is a reciprocal play of finding and seeking all through these verses.

There are two kinds of finding. There is a casual stumbling upon a thing that you were not looking for, and there is a finding as the result of seeking. It is the latter which is here. Christ did not casually stumble upon Philip, upon that morning, before they departed from the fords of the Jordan on their short journey to Cana of Galilee. He went to look for this other Galilean, one who was connected with Andrew and Peter, a native of the same little village. He went and found him; and whilst Philip was all unexpectant and undesirous, the Master came to him and laid His hand upon him, and drew him to Himself.

Now that is what Christ often does. There are men like the merchantman who went all over the world seeking goodly pearls, who with some eager longing to possess light, or truth, or goodness, or rest, search up and down and find it nowhere, because they are looking for it in a hundred different places. They are expecting to find a little here and a little there, and to piece all together to make of the fragments one all-sufficing restfulness. Then when they are most eager in their search, or when, perhaps, it has all died down into despair and apathy, the veil seems to be withdrawn, and they see Him whom they have been seeking all the time and knew not that He was there beside them. All, and more than all, that they sought for in the many pearls is stored for them in the one Pearl of great price. The ancient covenant stands firm to-day as for ever. 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

But then there are others, like Paul on the road to Damascus or like Matthew the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom, on whom there is laid a sudden hand, to whom there comes a sudden conviction, on whose eyes, not looking to the East, there dawns the light of Christ's presence. Such cases occur all through the ages, for He is not to be confined, bless His name! within the narrow limits of answering seeking souls, or of showing Himself to people that are brought to Him by human instrumentality; but far beyond these bounds He goes, and many a time discloses His beauty and His sweetness to hearts that wist not of Him, and who can only say, 'Lo! God was in this place, and I knew it not.' 'Thou wast found of them that sought Thee not.'

As it was in His miracles upon earth, so it has been in the sweet and gracious works of His grace ever since. Sometimes He healed in response to the yearning desire that looked out of sick eyes, or that spoke from parched lips, and no man that ever came to Him and said 'Heal me!' was sent away beggared of His blessing. Sometimes He healed in response to the beseeching of those who, with loving hearts, carried their dear ones and laid them at His feet. But sometimes, to magnify the spontaneity and the completeness of His own love, and to show us that He is bound and limited by no human co-operation, and that He is His own motive, He reached out the blessing to a hand that was not extended to grasp it; and by His question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' kindled desires that else had lain dormant for ever.

And so in this story before us; He will welcome and over-answer Andrew and John when they come seeking; He will turn round to them with a smile on His face, that converts the

question, 'What seek ye?' into an invitation, 'Come and see.' And when Andrew brings his brother to Him, He will go more than halfway to meet him. But when these are won, there still remains another way by which He will have disciples brought into His Kingdom, and that is by Himself going out and laying His hand on the man and drawing him to His heart by the revelation of His love. But further, and in a deeper sense, He really seeks us all, and, unasked, bestows His love upon us.

Whether we seek Him or no, there is no heart upon earth which Christ does not desire; and no man or woman within the sound of His gospel whom He is not in a very real sense seeking that He may draw them to Himself. His own word is a wonderful one: 'The Father *seeketh* such to worship Him'; as if God went all up and down the world looking for hearts to love Him and to turn to Him with reverent thankfulness. And as the Father, so the Son—who is for us the revelation of the Father: 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' No one on earth wanted Him, or dreamed of His coming. When He bowed the heavens and gathered Himself into the narrow space of the manger in Bethlehem, and took upon Him the limitations and the burdens and the weaknesses of manhood, it was not in response to any petition, it was in reply to no seeking; but He came spontaneously, unmoved, obeying but the impulse of His own heart, and because He would have mercy. He who is the Beginning, and will be First in all things, was first in this, that before they called He answered, and came upon earth unbesought and unexpected, because His own infinite love brought Him hither. Christ's mercy to a world does not come like water in a well that has to be pumped up, by our petitions, by our search, but like water in some fountain, rising sparkling into the sunlight by its own inward impulse. He is His own motive; and came to a forgetful and careless world, like a shepherd who goes after his flock in the wilderness, not because they bleat for him, while they crop the herbage which tempts them ever further from the fold and remember him and it no more, but because he cannot have them lost. Men are not conscious of needing Christ till He comes. The supply creates the demand. He is like the 'dew which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.'

But not only does Christ seek us all, inasmuch as the whole conception and execution of His great work are independent of man's desires, but He seeks us each in a thousand ways. He longs to have each of us for His disciples. He seeks each of us for His disciples, by the motion of His Spirit on our spirits, by stirring conviction in our consciences, by pricking us often with a sense of our own evil, by all our restlessness and dissatisfaction, by the disappointments and the losses, as by the brightnesses and the goodness of earthly providences, and often through such agencies as my lips and the lips of other men. The Master Himself, who seeks all mankind, has sought and is seeking you at this moment. Oh! yield to His search. The shepherd goes out on the mountain side, for all the storm and the snow, and wades knee-deep through the drifts until he finds the sheep. And your Shepherd, who is also your Brother, has come looking for you, and at this moment is putting out His hand and laying hold of some of you through my poor words, and saying to you, as He said to Philip, 'Follow Me!'

II. And now let us next consider that word of authority which, spoken to the one man in our text, is really spoken to us all.

'Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, "Follow Me!"' No doubt a great deal more passed, but no doubt what more passed was less significant and less important for the

development of faith in this man than what is recorded. The word of authority, the invitation which was a demand, the demand which was an invitation, and the personal impression which He produced upon Philip's heart, were the things that bound him to Jesus Christ for ever. 'Follow Me,' spoken at the beginning of the journey of Christ and His disciples back to Galilee, might have meant merely, on the surface, 'Come back with us.' But the words have, of course, a much deeper meaning. They mean—be My disciple. Think what is implied in them, and ask yourself whether the demand that Christ makes in these words is an unreasonable one, and then ask yourselves whether you have yielded to it or not.

We lose the force of the image by much repetition. Sheep follow a shepherd. Travellers follow a guide. Here is a man upon some dangerous cornice of the Alps, with a ledge of limestone as broad as the palm of your hand, and perhaps a couple of feet of snow above that, for him to walk upon, a precipice on either side; and his guide says, as he ropes himself to him, 'Now, tread where I tread!' Travellers follow their guides. Soldiers follow their commanders. There is the hell of the battlefield; here a line of wavering, timid, raw recruits. Their commander rushes to the front and throws himself upon the advancing enemy with the one word, 'Follow' and the coward becomes a hero. Soldiers follow their captains. Your Shepherd comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' Your Captain and Commander comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' In all the dreary wilderness, in all the difficult contingencies and conjunctions, in all the conflicts of life, this Man strides in front of us and proposes Himself to us as Guide, Example, Consoler, Friend, Companion, everything; and gathers up all duty, all blessedness, in the majestic and simple words, 'Follow Me.'

It is a call at the least to accept Him as a Teacher, but the whole gist of the context here is to show us that from the beginning Christ's disciples did not look upon Him as a Rabbi's disciples did, as being simply a teacher, but recognised Him as the Messias, the Son of God, the King of Israel. So that they were called upon by this command to accept His teaching in a very special way, not merely as Hillel or Gamaliel asked their disciples to accept theirs. Do you do that? Do you take Him as your illumination about all matters of theoretical truth, and of practical wisdom? Is His declaration of God your theology? Is His declaration of His own Person your creed? Do you think about His Cross as He did when He elected to be remembered in all the world by the broken body and the shed blood, which were the symbols of His reconciling death? Is His teaching, that the Son of Man comes to 'give His life a ransom for many,' the ground of your hope? Do you follow Him in your belief, and following Him in your belief, do you accept Him as, by His death and passion, the Saviour of your soul? That is the first step—to follow Him, to trust Him wholly for what He is, the Incarnate Son of God, the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and therefore for your sins and mine. This is a call to faith.

It is also a call to obedience. 'Follow Me' certainly means 'Do as I bid you,' but softens all the harshness of that command. Sedulously plant your tremulous feet in His firm footsteps. Where you see His track going across the bog be not afraid to walk after Him, though it may seem to lead you into the deepest and the blackest of it. 'Follow Him' and you will be right. 'Follow Him' and you will be blessed. Do as Christ did, or as according to the best of your judgment it seems to you that Christ would have done if He had been in your circumstances; and you will not go far wrong. 'The Imitation of Christ,' which Thomas a

Kempis wrote his book about, is the sum of all practical Christianity. 'Follow Me!' makes discipleship to be something more than intellectual acceptance of His teaching, something more than even reliance for my salvation upon His work. It makes discipleship—springing out of these two—the acceptance of His teaching and the consequent reliance, by faith, upon His word—to be a practical reproduction of His character and conduct in mine.

It is a call to communion. If a man follows Christ he will walk close behind Him, and near enough to Him to hear Him speak, and to be 'guided by His eye.' He will be separated from other people, and from other paths. In these four things, then—Faith, Obedience, Imitation, Communion—lies the essence of discipleship. No man is a Christian who has not in some measure all four. Have you got them?

What right has Jesus Christ to ask me to follow Him? Why should I? Who is He that He should set Himself up as being the perfect Example and the Guide for all the world? What has He done to bind me to Him, that I should take Him for my Master, and yield myself to Him in a subjection that I refuse to the mightiest names in literature, and thought, and practical benevolence? Who is this that assumes thus to dominate over us all? Ah! brethren, there is only one answer. 'This is none other than the Son of God who has given Himself a ransom for me, and therefore has the right, and only therefore has the right, to say to me, "Follow Me."'

III. And now one last word. Think for a moment about this silently and swiftly obedient disciple.

Philip says nothing. Of course the narrative is mere sketchy outline. He is silent, but he yields. Ah, brethren, how quickly a soul may be won or lost! That moment, when Philip's decision was trembling in the balance, was but a moment. It might have gone the other way, for Christ has no pressed men in His army; they are all volunteers. It might have gone the other way. A moment may settle for you whether you will be His disciple or not. People tell us that the belief in instantaneous conversions is unphilosophical. It seems to me that the objections to them are unphilosophical. All decisions are matters of an instant. Hesitation may be long, weighing and balancing may be a protracted process, but the decision is always a moment's work, a knife-edge. And there is no reason whatever why any one listening to me may not now, if he or she will, do as this man Philip did on the spot, and when Christ says 'Follow Me,' turn to Him and answer, 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'

There is an old church tradition which says that the disciple who at a subsequent period answered Christ, 'Lord! suffer me first to go and bury my father,' was this same Apostle. I do not think that at all likely, but the tradition suggests to us one last thought about the reasons why people are kept back from yielding this obedience to Christ's invitation. Many of you are kept back, as that procrastinating follower was, because there are some other duties which you feel, or make to be, more important. 'I will think about Christianity and turning religious when this, that, or the other thing has been got over. I have my position in life to make. I have a great many things to do that must be done at once, and really, I have not time to think about it.'

Then there are some of you that are kept from following Christ because you have never yet found out that you need a guide at all. Then there are some of you that are kept back

because you like very much better to go your own way, and to follow your own inclination, and dislike the idea of following the will of another. There are a host of other reasons that I do not need to deal with now; but oh! brethren, none of them is worth pleading. They are excuses, they are not reasons. 'They all with one consent began to make excuse'—excuses, not reasons; and manufactured excuses, in order to cover a decision which has been taken before, and on other grounds altogether, which it is not convenient to bring up to the surface. I am not going to deal with these in detail, but I beseech you, do not let what I venture to call Christ's seeking of you once more, even by my poor words now, be in vain.

Follow Him. Trust, obey, imitate, hold fellowship with Him. You will always have a Companion, you will always have a Protector. 'He that followeth Me,' saith He, 'shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' And if you will listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow Him, that sweet old promise will be true, in its divinest and sweetest sense, about your life, in time; and about your life in the moment of death, the isthmus between two worlds, and about your life in eternity—'They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun nor heat smite them; for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.' 'Follow thou Me.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: IV. NATHANAEL

'Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48. Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'—JOHN i. 45-49.

The words are often the least part of a conversation. The Evangelist can tell us what Nathanael said to Jesus, and what Jesus said to Nathanael, but no Evangelist can reproduce the look, the tone, the magnetic influence which streamed out from Christ, and, we may believe, more than anything He said, riveted these men to Him.

It looks as if Nathanael and his companions were very easily convinced, as if their adhesion to such tremendous claims as those of Jesus Christ was much too facile a thing to be a very deep one. But what can be put down in black and white goes a very short way to solve the secret of the power which drew them to Himself.

The incident which is before us now runs substantially on the same lines as the previous bringing of Peter to Jesus Christ. In both cases the man is brought by a friend, in both cases the friend's weapon is simply the expression of his own personal experience, 'We have found the Messias,' although Philip has a little more to say about Christ's correspondence with the prophetic word. In both cases the work is finished by our Lord Himself manifesting His own supernatural knowledge to the inquiring spirit, though in the case of Nathanael that process is a little more lengthened out than in the case of Peter, because there was a little ice of hesitation and of doubt to be melted away. And Nathanael, starting from a lower point than Peter, having questions and hesitations which the other had not, rises to a higher point of faith and certitude, and from his lips first of all comes the full articulate confession, beyond which the Apostles never went as long as our Lord was upon earth: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.' So that both in regard to the revelation that is given of the character of our Lord, and in regard to the teaching that is given of the development and process of faith in a soul, this last narrative fitly crowns the whole series. In looking at it with you now, I think I shall best bring out its force by asking you to take it as falling into these three portions: first, the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother; then the conversation—a soul fastened to Christ by Himself; and then the rapturous confession—'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

I. Look, then, first of all, at the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother.

'Philip findeth Nathanael.' Nathanael, in all probability, as commentators will tell you, is the Apostle Bartholomew; and in the catalogues of the Apostles in the Gospels, Philip and he are always associated together. So that the two men, friends before, had their friendship

riveted and made more close by this sacredest of all bonds, that the one had been to the other the means of bringing him to Jesus Christ. There is nothing that ties men to each other like that. If you want to know the full sweetness of association with friends, and of human love, get some heart knit to yours by this sacred and eternal bond that it owes to you its first knowledge of the Saviour. So all human ties will be sweetened, ennobled, elevated, and made perpetual.

'We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.' Philip knows nothing about Christ's supernatural birth, nor about its having been in Bethlehem; to him He is the son of a Nazarene peasant. But, notwithstanding that, He is the great, significant, mysterious Person for whom the whole sacred literature of Israel had been one long yearning for centuries; and he has come to believe that this Man standing beside him is the Person on whom all previous divine communications for a millennium past focussed and centred.

I need not dwell upon these words, because to do so would be to repeat substantially what I said in a former sermon on these first disciples, about the value of personal conviction as a means of producing conviction in the minds of others, and about the necessity and the possibility of all who have found Christ for themselves saying so to others, and thereby becoming His missionaries and evangelists.

I do not need to repeat what I said on that occasion; therefore I pass on to the very natural hesitation and question of Nathanael: 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' A prejudice, no doubt, but a very harmless one; a very thin ice which melted as soon as Christ's smile beamed upon him. And a most natural prejudice. Nathanael came from Cana of Galilee, a little hill village, three or four miles from Nazareth. We all know the bitter feuds and jealousies of neighbouring villages, and how nothing is so pleasant to the inhabitants of one as a gibe about the inhabitants of another. And in Nathanael's words there simply speaks the rustic jealousy of Cana against Nazareth.

It is easy to blame him, but do you think that you or I, if we had been in his place, would have been likely to have said anything very different? Suppose you were told that a peasant out of Ross-shire was a man on whom the whole history of this nation hung. Do you think you would be likely to believe it without first saying, 'That is a strange place for such a person to be born in'? Galilee was the despised part of Palestine, and Nazareth obviously was a proverbially despised village of Galilee; and this Jesus was a carpenter's son that nobody had ever heard of. It seemed to be a strange head on which the divine dove should flutter down, passing by all the Pharisees and the Scribes, all the great people and wise people. Nathanael's prejudice was but the giving voice to a fault that is as wide as humanity, and which we have every day of our lives to fight with; not only in regard to religious matters but in regard to all others—namely, the habit of estimating people, and their work, and their wisdom, and their power to teach us, by the class to which they are supposed to belong, or even by the place from which they come.

'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Can a German teach an Englishman anything that he does not know?' 'Is a Protestant to owe anything of spiritual illumination to a Roman Catholic?' 'Are we Dissenters to receive any wisdom or example from Churchmen?' 'Will a Conservative be able to give any lessons in politics to a Liberal?' 'Is there any other

bit of England that can teach Lancashire?' Take care that whilst you are holding up your hands in horror against the prejudices of our Lord's contemporaries, who stumbled at His origin, you are not doing the same thing in regard to all manner of subjects twenty times a day.

That is one very plain lesson, and not at all too secular for a sermon. Take another. This three-parts innocent prejudice of Nathanael brings into clear relief for us what a very real obstacle to the recognition of our Lord's Messianic authority His apparent lowly origin was. We have got over it, and it is no difficulty to us; but it was so then. When Jesus Christ came into this world Judaea was ruled by the most heartless of aristocracies, an aristocracy of cultured pedants. Wherever you get such a class you get people who think that there can be nobody worth looking at, or worth attending to, outside the little limits of their own supercilious superiority. Why did Jesus Christ come from 'the men of the earth,' as the Rabbis called all who had not learned to cover every plain precept with spiders' webs of casuistry? Why, for one thing, in accordance with the general law that the great reformers and innovators always come from outside these classes, that the Spirit of the Lord shall come on a herdsman like Amos, and fishermen and peasants spread the Gospel through the world; and that in politics, in literature, in science, as well as in religion, it is always true that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' To the cultivated classes you have to look for a great deal that is precious and good, but for fresh impulse, in unbroken fields, you have to look outside them. And so the highest of all lives is conformed to the general law.

More than that, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph,' came thus because He was the poor man's Christ, because He was the ignorant man's Christ, because His word was not for any class, but as broad as the world. He came poor, obscure, unlettered, that all who, like Him, were poor and untouched by the finger of earthly culture, might in Him find their Brother, their Helper, and their Friend.

'Philip saith unto him, Come and see.' He is not going to argue the question. He gives the only possible answer to it—'You ask Me, can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Come and see whether it is a good thing or no; and if it is, and if it came out of Nazareth, well then, the question has answered itself.' The quality of a thing cannot be settled by the origin of the thing.

As it so happened, this Man did not come out of Nazareth at all, though neither Philip nor Nathanael knew it; but if He had, it would have been all the same. The right answer was 'Come and see.'

Now although, of course, there is no kind of correspondence between the mere prejudice of this man Nathanael and the rooted intellectual doubts of other generations, yet 'Come and see' carries in it the essence of all Christian apologetics. By far the wisest thing that any man who has to plead the cause of Christianity can do is to put Christ well forward, and let people look at Him, and trust Him to produce His own impression. We may argue round, and round, and round about Him for evermore, and we shall never convince as surely as by simply holding Him forth. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Yet we are so busy proving Christianity that we sometimes have no time to preach it; so busy demonstrating that Jesus Christ is this, that, and the other thing, or contradicting the notion that He is not

this, that, and the other thing, that we forget simply to present Him for men to look at. Depend upon it, whilst argument has its function, and there are men that must be approached thereby; on the whole, and for the general, the best way of propagating Christianity is to proclaim it, and the second best way is to prove it. Our arguments do fare very often very much as did that elaborate discourse that a bishop once preached to prove the existence of a God, at the end of which a simple old woman who had not followed his reasoning very intelligently, exclaimed, 'Well, for all he says, I can't help thinking there is a God after all.' The errors that are quoted to be confuted often remain more clear in the hearers' minds than the attempted confutations. Hold forth Christ—cry aloud to men, 'Come and see!' and some eyes will turn and some hearts cleave to Him.

And on the other side, dear brethren, you have not done fairly by Christianity until you have complied with this invitation, and submitted your mind and heart honestly to the influence and the impression that Christ Himself would make upon it.

II. We come now to the second stage—the conversation between Christ and Nathanael, where we see a soul fastened to Christ by Himself.

In general terms, as I remarked, the method by which our Lord manifests His Messiahship to this single soul is a revelation of His supernatural knowledge of him. But a word or two may be said about the details. Mark the emphasis with which the Evangelist shows us that our Lord speaks this discriminating characterisation of Nathanael before Nathanael had come to Him: 'He saw him coming.' So it was not with a swift, penetrating glance of intuition that He read his character in his face. It was not that He generalised rapidly from one action which He had seen him do. It was not from any previous personal knowledge of him, for, obviously, from the words of Philip to Nathanael, the latter had never seen Jesus Christ. As Nathanael was drawing near Him, before he had done anything to show himself, our Lord speaks the words which show that He had read his very heart: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'

That is to say, here is a man who truly represents that which was the ideal of the whole nation. The reference is, no doubt, to the old story of the occasion on which Jacob's name was changed to Israel. And we shall see a further reference to the same story in the subsequent verses. Jacob had wrestled with God in that mysterious scene by the brook Jabbok, and had overcome, and had received instead of the name Jacob, 'a supplanter,' the name of Israel, 'for as a Prince hast thou power with God and hast prevailed.' And, says Christ: 'This man also is a son of Israel, one of God's warriors, who has prevailed with Him by prayer.' 'In whom is no guile'—Jacob in his early life had been marked and marred by selfish craft. Subtlety and guile had been the very keynote of his character. To drive that out of him, years of discipline and pain and sorrow had been needed. And not until it had been driven out of him could his name be altered, and he become Israel. This man has had the guile driven out of him. By what process? The words are a verbal quotation from Psalm xxxii.: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Clear, candid openness of spirit, and the freedom of soul from all that corruption which the Psalmist calls 'guile,' is the property of him only who has received it, by confession, by pardon, and by cleansing, from God. Thus Nathanael, in his wrestling, had won the great gift. His transgression had been forgiven; his iniquity had been covered; to him God had not

imputed his sin; and in his spirit, therefore, there was no guile. Ah, brother! if that black drop is to be cleansed out of your heart, it must be by the same means—confession to God and pardon from God. And then you too will be a prince with Him, and your spirit will be frank and free, and open and candid.

Nathanael, with astonishment, says, 'Lord, whence knowest Thou me?' Not that he appropriates the description to himself, or recognises the truthfulness of it, but he is surprised that Christ should have means of forming any judgment with reference to him, and so he asks Him, half expecting an answer which will show the natural origin of our Lord's knowledge: 'Whence knowest Thou me?' Then comes the answer, which, to supernatural insight into Nathanael's character, adds supernatural knowledge of Nathanael's secret actions: 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. And it is because I saw thee under the fig-tree that I knew thee to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."' So then, under the fig-tree, Nathanael must have been wrestling in prayer; under the fig-tree must have been confessing his sins; under the fig-tree must have been longing and looking for the Deliverer who was to 'turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' So solitary had been that vigil, and so little would any human eye that had looked upon it have known what had been passing in his mind, that Christ's knowledge of it and of its significance at once lights up in Nathanael's heart the fire of the glad conviction, 'Thou art the Son of God.' If we had seen Nathanael, we should only have seen a man sitting, sunk in thought, under a fig-tree; but Jesus had seen the spiritual struggle which had no outward marks, and to have known which He must have exercised the divine prerogative of reading the heart.

I ask you to consider whether Nathanael's conclusion was not right, and whether that woman of Samaria was not right when she hurried back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and said, 'Come and see a man that told me *all* that ever I did.' That 'all' was a little stretch of facts, but still it was true in spirit. And her inference was absolutely true: 'Is not this the Christ, the Son of God?' This is the first miracle that Jesus Christ wrought. His supernatural knowledge, which cannot be struck out from the New Testament representations of His character, is as much a mark of divinity as any of the other of His earthly manifestations. It is not the highest; it does not appeal to our sympathies as some of the others do, but it is irrefragable. Here is a man to whom all men with whom He came in contact were like those clocks with a crystal face which shows us all the works. How does He come to have this perfect and absolute knowledge?

That omniscience, as manifested here, shows us how glad Christ is when He sees anything good, anything that He can praise in any of us. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Not a word about Nathanael's prejudice, not a word about any of his faults (though no doubt he had plenty of them), but the cordial praise that he was an honest, a sincere man, following after God and after truth. There is nothing which so gladdens Christ as to see in us any faint traces of longing for, and love towards, and likeness to, His own self. His omniscience is never so pleased as when beneath heaps and mountains of vanity and sin it discerns in a man's heart some poor germ of goodness and longing for His grace.

And then again, notice how we have here our Lord's omniscience set forth as cognisant of all our inward crises and struggles, 'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.' I

suppose all of us could look back to some place or other, under some hawthorn hedge, or some boulder by the seashore, or some mountain-top, or perhaps in some back-parlour, or in some crowded street, where some never-to-be-forgotten epoch in our soul's history passed, unseen by all eyes, and which would have shown no trace to any onlooker, except perhaps a tightly compressed lip. Let us rejoice to feel that Christ sees all these moments which no other eye can see. In our hours of crisis, and in our monotonous, uneventful moments, in the rush of the furious waters, when the stream of our lives is caught among rocks, and in the long, languid reaches of its smoothest flow, when we are fighting with our fears or yearning for His light, or even when sitting dumb and stolid, like snow men, apathetic and frozen in our indifference, He sees us, and pities, and will help the need which He beholds.

'Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Saviour is not by;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Saviour is not near.'

'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.'

III. One word more about this rapturous confession, which crowns the whole: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

Where had Nathanael learned these great names? He was a disciple of John the Baptist, and he had no doubt heard John's testimony as recorded in this same chapter, when he told us how the voice from Heaven had bid him recognise the Messiah by the token of the descending Dove, and how he 'saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.' John's testimony was echoed in Nathanael's confession. Undoubtedly he attached but vague ideas to the name, far less articulate and doctrinal than we have the privilege of doing. To him 'Son of God' could not have meant all that it ought to mean to us, but it meant something that he saw clearly, and a great deal beyond that he saw but dimly. It meant that God had sent, and was in some special sense the Father of, this Jesus of Nazareth.

'Thou art the King of Israel,' John had been preaching, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' The Messiah was to be the theocratic King, the King, not of 'Judah' nor of 'the Jews,' but of 'Israel,' the nation that had entered into covenant with God. So the substance of the confession was the Messiahship of Jesus, as resting upon His special divine relationship and leading to His Kingly sway.

Notice also the enthusiasm of the confession; one's ear hears clearly a tone of rapture in it. The joy-bells of the man's heart are all a-ringing. It is no mere intellectual acknowledgment of Christ as Messiah. The difference between mere head-belief and heart-faith lies precisely in the presence of these elements of confidence, of enthusiastic loyalty, and absolute submission.

So the great question for each of us is, not, Do I believe as a piece of my intellectual creed that Christ is 'the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel'? I suppose almost all my hearers here now do that. That will not make you a Christian, my friend. That will neither save your soul nor quiet your heart, nor bring you peace and strength in life, nor open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to you. A man may be miserable, wholly sunk in all manner of wickedness and evil, die the death of a dog, and go to punishment hereafter, though he

believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel. You want something more than that. You want just this element of rapturous acknowledgment, of loyal submission, absolute obedience, of unfaltering trust.

Look at these first disciples, six brave men that had all that loyalty and love to Him; though there was not a soul in the world but themselves to share their convictions. Do they not shame you? When He comes to you, as He does come, with this question, 'Whom do ye say that I am?' may God give you grace to answer, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and not only to answer it with your lips, but to trust Him wholly with your hearts, and with enthusiastic devotion to bow your whole being in adoring wonder and glad submission at His feet. If we are 'Israelites indeed,' our hearts will crown Him as the 'King of Israel.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: V. BELIEVING AND SEEING

'Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'—JOHN i. 50, 51.

Here we have the end of the narrative of the gathering together of the first disciples, which has occupied several sermons. We have had occasion to point out how each incident in the series has thrown some fresh light upon two main subjects, namely, upon some phase or other of the character and work of Jesus Christ, or upon the various ways by which faith, which is the condition of discipleship, is kindled in men's souls. These closing words may be taken as the crowning thoughts on both these matters.

Our Lord recognises and accepts the faith of Nathanael and his fellows, but, like a wise Teacher, lets His pupils at the very beginning get a glimpse of how much lies ahead for them to learn; and in the act of accepting the faith gives just one hint of the great tract of yet uncomprehended knowledge of Him which lies before them; 'Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.' He accepts Nathanael's confession and the confession of his fellows. Human lips have given Him many great and wonderful titles in this chapter. John called Him 'the Lamb of God'; the first disciples hailed Him as the 'Messias, which is the Christ'; Nathanael fell before Him with the rapturous exclamation, 'Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel!' All these crowns had been put on His head by human hands, but here He crowns Himself. He makes a mightier claim than any that they had dreamed of, and proclaims Himself to be the medium of all communication and intercourse between heaven and earth: 'Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

So, then, there are two great principles that lie in these verses, and are contained in, first, our Lord's mighty promise to His new disciples, and second, in our Lord's witness to Himself. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

I. Our Lord's promise to His new disciples.

Christ's words here may be translated either as a question or as an affirmation. It makes comparatively little difference to the substantial meaning whether we read 'believest thou?' or 'thou believest.' In the former case there will be a little more vivid expression of surprise and admiration at the swiftness of Nathanael's faith, but in neither case are we to find anything of the nature of blame or of doubt as to the reality of his belief. The question, if it be a question, is no question as to whether Nathanael's faith was a genuine thing or not. There is no hint that he has been too quick with his confession, and has climbed too rapidly to the point that he has attained. But in either case, whether the word be a question or an affirmation, we are to see in it the solemn and glad recognition of the reality of Nathanael's confession and belief.

Here is the first time that that word 'belief' came from Christ's lips; and when we remember all the importance that has been attached to it in the subsequent history of the Church, and the revolution in human thought which followed upon our Lord's demand of our faith, there is an interest in noticing the first appearance of the word. It was an epoch in the history of the world when Christ first claimed and accepted a man's faith.

Of course the second part of this verse, 'Thou shalt see greater things than these,' has its proper fulfilment in the gradual manifestation of His person and character, which followed through the events recorded in the Gospels. His life of service, His words of wisdom, His deeds of power and of pity, His death of shame and of glory, His Resurrection and His Ascension, these are the 'greater things' which Nathanael is promised. They all lay unrevealed yet, and what our Lord means is simply this: 'If you will continue to trust in Me, as you have trusted Me, and stand beside Me, you will see unrolled before your eyes and comprehended by your faith the great facts which will make the manifestation of God to the world.' But though that be the original application of the words, yet I think we may fairly draw from them some lessons that are of importance to ourselves; and I ask you to look at the hint that they give us about three things,—faith and discipleship, faith and sight, faith and progress. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.'

First, here is light thrown upon the relation between faith and discipleship. It is clear that our Lord here uses the word for the first time in the full Christian sense, that He regards the exercise of faith as being practically synonymous with being a disciple, that from the very first, believers were disciples, and disciples were believers.

Then, notice still further that our Lord here employs the word 'belief' without any definition of what or whom it is that they were to believe. He Himself, and not certain thoughts about Him, is the true object of a man's faith. We may believe a proposition, but faith must grasp a person. Even when the person is made known to us by a proposition which we have to believe before we can trust the person, still the essence of faith is not the intellectual process of laying hold upon a certain thought, and acquiescing in it, but the moral process of casting myself in full confidence upon the Being that is revealed to me by the thought,—of laying my hand, and leaning my weight, on the Man about whom it tells me. And so faith, which is discipleship, has in it for its very essence the personal element of trust in Jesus Christ.

Then, further, notice how widely different from our creed was Nathanael's creed, and yet how identical with our faith, if we are Christians, was Nathanael's faith. He knew nothing about the very heart of Christ's work, His atoning death. He knew nothing about the highest glory of Christ's person, His divine Sonship, in its unique and lofty sense. These lay unrevealed, and were amongst the greater things which he was yet to see; but though thus his knowledge was imperfect, and his creed incomplete as compared with ours, his faith was the very same. He laid hold upon Christ, he clave to Him with all his heart, he was ready to accept His teaching, he was willing to do His will, and as for the rest—'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' So, dear brethren, from these words of my text here, from the unhesitating attribution of the lofty notion of faith to this man, from the way in which our Lord uses the word, are gathered these three points that I beseech you to ponder: there is no discipleship without faith; faith is the personal grasp of Christ Himself; the contents of creeds may differ whilst the element of faith remains the same. I beseech you let Christ

come to you with the question of my text, and as He looks you in the eyes, hear Him say to you, 'Believest *thou*?'

Secondly, notice how in this great promise to the new disciples there is light thrown upon another subject, viz. the connection between faith and sight. There is a great deal about seeing in this context. Christ said to the first two that followed Him, 'Come and see.' Philip met Nathanael's thin film of prejudice with the same words, 'Come and see.' Christ greeted the approaching Nathanael with 'When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee.' And now His promise is cast into the same metaphor: 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.'

There is a double antithesis here. 'I saw thee,' 'Thou shalt see Me.' 'Thou wast convinced because thou didst feel that thou wert the passive object of My vision. Thou shalt be still more convinced when illuminated by Me. Thou shalt see even as thou art seen. I saw thee, and that bound thee to Me; thou shalt see Me, and that will confirm the bond.'

There is another antithesis, namely—between believing and seeing. 'Thou believest—that is thy present; thou shalt see, that is thy hope for the future.' Now I have already explained that, in the proper primary meaning and application of the words, the sight which is here promised is simply the observance with the outward eye of the historical facts of our Lord's life which were yet to be learned. But still we may gather a truth from this antithesis which will be of use to us. 'Thou believest—thou shalt see'; that is to say, in the loftiest region of spiritual experience you must believe first, in order that you may see.

I do not mean, as is sometimes meant, by that statement that a man has to try to force his understanding into the attitude of accepting religious truth, in order that he may have an experience which will convince him that it is true. I mean a very much simpler thing than that, and a very much truer one, viz. this, that unless we trust to Christ and take our illumination from Him, we shall never behold a whole set of truths which, when once we trust Him, are all plain and clear to us. It is no mysticism to say that. What do you *know* about God?—I put emphasis upon the word 'know'—What do you know about Him, however much you may argue and speculate and think probable, and fear, and hope, and question, about Him? What do you know about Him apart from Jesus Christ? What do you know about human duty, apart from Him? What do you know of all that dim region that lies beyond the grave, apart from Him? If you trust Him, if you fall at His feet and say 'Rabbi! Thou art my Teacher and mine illumination,' then you will see. You will see God, man, yourselves, duty; you will see light upon a thousand complications and perplexities; and you will have a brightness above that of the noonday sun, streaming into the thickest darkness of death and the grave and the awful hereafter. Christ is the Light. In that 'Light shall we see light.' And just as it needs the sun to rise in order that my eye may behold the outer world, so it needs that I shall have Christ shining in my heaven to illuminate the whole universe, in order that I may see clearly. 'Believe and thou shalt see.' For only when we trust Him do the mightiest truths that affect humanity stand plain and clear before us.

And besides that, if we trust Christ, we get a living experience of a multitude of facts and principles which are all mist and darkness to men except through their faith; an experience which is so vivid and brings such certitude as that it may well be called vision. The world says, 'Seeing is believing.' So it is about the coarse things that you can handle, but about

everything that is higher than these invert the proverb, and you get the truth. 'Seeing is believing.' Yes, in regard to outward things. Believing is seeing in regard to God and spiritual truth. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see.'

Then, thirdly, there is light here about another matter, the connection between faith and progress. 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' A wise teacher stimulates his scholars from the beginning, by giving them glimpses of how much there is ahead to be learnt. That does not drive them to despair; it braces all their powers. And so Christ, as His first lesson to these men, substantially says, 'You have learnt nothing yet, you are only beginning.' That is true about us all. Faith at first, both in regard to its contents and its quality, is very rudimentary and infantile. A man when he is first converted—perhaps suddenly—knows after a fashion that he himself is a very sinful, wretched, poor creature, and he knows that Jesus Christ has died for him, and is his Saviour, and his heart goes out to Him, in confidence and love and obedience. But he is only standing at the door and peeping in as yet. He has only mastered the alphabet. He is but on the frontier of the promised land. His faith has brought him into contact with infinite power, and what will be the end of that? He will indefinitely grow. His faith has started him on a course to which there is no natural end. As long as it keeps alive he will be growing and growing, and getting nearer and nearer to the great centre of all.

So here is a grand possibility opened out in these simple words, a possibility which alone meets what you need, and what you are craving for, whether you know it or not, namely, something that will give you ever new powers and acquirements; something which will ensure your closer and ever closer approach to an absolute object of joy and truth; something that will ensure you against stagnation and guarantee unceasing progress. Everything else gets worn out, sooner or later; if not in this world, then in another. There is one course on which a man can enter with the certainty that there is no end to it, that it will open out, and out, and out as he advances—with the certainty that, come life, come death, it is all the same.

When the plant grows too tall for the greenhouse they lift the roof, and it grows higher still. Whether you have your growth in this lower world, or whether you have your top up in the brightness and the blue of heaven, the growth is in one direction. There is a way that secures endless progress, and here lies the secret of it: 'Thou believest! thou shalt see greater things than these.'

Now, brethren, that is a grand possibility, and it is a solemn lesson for some of you. You professing Christian people, are you any taller than you were when you were born? Have you grown at all? Are you growing now? Have you seen any further into the depths of Jesus Christ than you did on that first day when you fell at His feet and said, 'Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel'? His promise to you then was, 'Thou believest, thou shalt see greater things.' If you have not seen greater things it is because your faith has broken down, if it has not expired.

II. Now let me turn to the second thought which lies in these great words.

We have here, as I said, our Lord crowning Himself by His own witness to His own dignity. 'Hereafter ye shall see the heavens opened.' Mark how, with superbly autocratic lips, He bases this great utterance upon nothing else but His own word. Prophets ever said,

'Thus saith the Lord.' Christ ever said: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' 'Because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself.' He puts His own assurance instead of all argument and of all support to His words.

'Hereafter.' A word which is possibly not genuine, and is omitted, as you will observe, in the Revised Version. If it is to be retained it must be translated, not 'hereafter,' as if it were pointing to some indefinite period in the future, but 'from henceforth,' as if asserting that the opening heavens and the descending angels began to be manifested from that first hour of His official work. 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending.' That is an allusion from the story of Jacob at Bethel. We have found reference to Jacob's history already in the conversation with Nathanael, 'An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' And here is an unmistakable reference to that story, when the fugitive, with his head on the stony pillow, and the violet Syrian sky, with all its stars, rounding itself above him, beheld the ladder on which the angels of God ascended and descended. 'So,' says Christ, 'you shall see, in no vision of the night, in no transitory appearance, but in a practical waking reality, that ladder come down again, and the angels of God moving upon it in their errands of mercy.'

And who, or what, is this ladder? Christ. Do not read these words as meaning that the angels of God were to come down on Him to help, and to honour, and to succour Him as they did once or twice in His life, but as meaning that they are to ascend and descend by Him for the help and blessing of the whole world.

That is to say, to put it into plain words, Christ is the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, the ladder with its foot upon the earth in His humanity, and its top in the heavens. 'No man hath ascended up into heaven save He which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.'

My time will not allow me to expand these thoughts as I would have done; let me put them in the briefest outline. Christ is the medium of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as He is the medium of all revelation. I have spoken incidentally about that in the former part of this sermon, so I do not dwell on it now. Christ is the ladder between heaven and earth, inasmuch as in Him the sense of separation, and the reality of separation, are swept away. Sin has shut heaven; there comes down from it many a blessing upon unthankful heads, but between it in its purity and the earth in its muddy foulness 'there is a great gulf fixed.' It is not because God is great and I am small, or because He is Infinite and I am a mere pin-point as against a great continent, it is not because He lives for ever, and my life is but a hand-breadth, it is not because of the difference between His Omniscience and my ignorance, His strength and my weakness, that I am parted from Him. 'Your sins have separated between you and your God,' and no man, build he Babels ever so high, can reach thither. There is one means by which the separation is at an end, and by which all objective hindrances to union, and all subjective hindrances, are alike swept away. Christ has come, and in Him the heavens have bended down to touch, and touching to bless, this low earth, and man and God are at one once more.

He is the ladder, or sole medium of communication, inasmuch as by Him all divine blessings, grace, helps, and favours, come down angel-like, into our weak and needy hearts. Every strength, every mercy, every spiritual power, consolation in every sorrow, fitness for

duty, illumination in darkness, all gifts that any of us can need, come to us down on that one shining way, the mediation and the work of the Divine-Human Christ, the Lord.

He is the ladder, the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as by Him my poor desires and prayers and intercessions, my wishes, my sighs, my confessions rise to God. 'No man cometh to the Father but by Me.' He is the ladder, the means of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as at the last, if ever we enter there at all, we shall enter through Him and through Him alone, who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

Ah, dear brethren! men are telling us now that there is no connection between earth and heaven except such as telescopes and spectroscopes can make out. We are told that there is no ladder, that there are no angels, that possibly there is no God, or if that there be, we have nothing to do with Him nor He with us; that our prayers cannot get to His ears, if He have ears, nor His hand be stretched out to help us, if He have a hand. I do not know how this cultivated generation is to be brought back again to faith in God and delivered from that ghastly doubt which empties heaven and saddens earth to its victims, but by giving heed to the word which Christ spoke to the whole race while He addressed Nathanael, 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' If He be the Son of God, then all these heavenly messengers reach the earth by Him. If He be the Son of Man, then every man may share in the gifts which through Him are brought into the world, and His Manhood, which evermore dwelt in heaven, even while on earth, and was ever girt about by angel presences, is at once the measure of what each of us may become, and the power by which we may become it.

One thing is needful for this wonderful consummation, even our faith. And oh! how blessed it will be if in waste solitudes we can see the open heaven, and in the blackest night the blaze of the glory of a present Christ, and hear the soft rustle of angels' wings filling the air, and find in every place 'a house of God and a gate of heaven,' because He is there. All that may be yours on one condition: 'Believest thou? Thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

JESUS THE JOY-BRINGER

'And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.'—JOHN ii. 1-11.

The exact dating of this first miracle indicates an eye-witness. As Nazareth was some thirty miles distant from the place where John was baptizing, and Cana about four miles from Nazareth, the 'third day' is probably reckoned from the day of the calling of Philip. Jesus and His disciples seem to have been invited to the marriage feast later than the other guests, as Mary was already there. She appears to have been closely connected with the family celebrating the feast, as appears from her knowledge of the deficiency in the wine, and her direction to the servants.

The first point, which John makes all but as emphatic as the miracle itself, is the new relation between Mary and Jesus, the lesson she had to learn, and her sweet triumphant trust. Now that she sees her Son surrounded by His disciples, the secret hope which she had nourished silently for so long bursts into flame, and she turns to Him with beautiful faith in His power to help, even in the small present need. What an example her first word to Him sets us all! Like the two sad sisters at Bethany, she is sure that to tell Him of trouble is enough, for that His own heart will impel Him to share, and perchance to relieve it. Let us tell Jesus our wants and leave Him to deal with them as He knows how.

Of course, His addressing her as 'Woman' has not the meaning which it would have with us, for the term is one of respect and courtesy, but there is a plain intimation of a new distance in it, which is strengthened by the question, 'What is there in common between us?' What in common between a mother and her son! Yes, but she has to learn that the assumption of the position of Messiah in which her mother's pride so rejoiced, carried necessarily a consequence, the first of the swords which were to pierce that mother's heart of hers. That her Son should no more call her 'mother,' but 'woman,' told her that the old days of being subject to her were past for ever, and that the old relation was merged in the new one of Messiah and disciple—a bitter thought, which many a parent has to taste the

bitterness of still, when wider outlooks and new sense of a vocation come to their children. Few mothers are able to accept the inevitable as Mary did, Jesus' 'hour' is not to be prescribed to Him, but His own consciousness of the fit time must determine His action. What gave Him the signal that the hour was struck is not told us, nor how soon after that moment it came. But the saying gently but decisively declares His freedom, His infallible accuracy, and certain intervention at the right time. We may think that He delays, but He always helps, 'and that right early.'

Mary's sweet humility and strong trust come out wonderfully in her direction to the servants, which is the exact opposite of what might have been expected after the cold douche administered to her eagerness to prompt Jesus. Her faith had laid hold of the little spark of promise in that 'not yet,' and had fanned it into a flame. 'Then He will intervene, and I can leave Him to settle when.' How firm, though ignorant, must have been the faith which did not falter even at the bitter lesson and the apparent repulse, and how it puts to shame our feebler confidence in our better known Lord, if ever He delays our requests! Mary left all to Jesus; His commands were to be implicitly obeyed. Do we submit to Him in that absolute fashion both as to the time and the manner of His responses to our petitions?

The next point is the actual miracle. It is told with remarkable vividness and equally remarkable reserve. We do not even learn in what precisely it consisted. Was all the water in the vessels turned into wine? Did the change affect only what was drawn out? No answer is possible to these questions. Jesus spoke no word of power, nor put forth His hand. His will silently effected the change on matter. So He manifested forth His glory as Creator and Sustainer, as wielding the divine prerogative of affecting material things by His bare volition.

The reality of the miracle is certified by the jovial remark of the 'ruler of the feast.' As Bengel says: 'The ignorance of the ruler proves the goodness of the wine; the knowledge of the servants, the reality of the miracle.' His palate, at any rate, was not so dulled as to be unable to tell a good 'brand' when he tasted it, nor is there any reason to suppose that Jesus was supplying more wine to a company that had already had more than enough.

The ruler's words are not meant to apply to the guests at that feast, but are quite general. But this Evangelist is fond of quoting words which have deeper meanings than the speakers dreamed, and with his mystically contemplative eye he sees hints and symbols of the spiritual in very common things. So we are not forcing higher meanings into the ruler's jest, but catching one intention of John's quotation of it, when we see in it an unconscious utterance of the great truth that Jesus keeps His best wine till the last. How many poor deluded souls are ever finding that the world does the very opposite, luring men on to be its slaves and victims by brilliant promises and shortlived delights, which sooner or later lose their deceitful lustre and become stale, and often positively bitter! 'The end of that mirth is heaviness.' The dreariest thing in all the world is a godless old age, and one of the most beautiful things in all the world is the calm sunset which so often glorifies a godly life that has been full of effort for Jesus, and of sorrows patiently borne as being sent by Him.

'Full often clad in radiant vest
Deceitfully goes forth the morn,'

but Christ more than keeps His morning's promises, and Christian experience is steadily progressive, if Christians cling close to Him, and Heaven will supply the transcendent confirmation of the blessed truth that was spoken unawares by the 'ruler' at that humble feast.

What effect the miracle produced on others is not told; probably the guests shared the ruler's ignorance, but its effect on the disciples is that they 'believed on Him.' They had 'believed' already, or they would not have been disciples (John i. 50), but their faith was deepened as well as called forth afresh. Our faith ought to be continuously and increasingly responsive to His continuous manifestations of Himself which we can all find in our own experience.

Jesus 'manifested His glory' in this first sign. What were the rays of that mild radiance? Surely the chief of them, in addition to the revelation of His sovereignty over matter, to which we have already referred, is that therein He hallowed the sweet sacred joys of marriage and family life, that therein He revealed Himself as looking with sympathetic eye on the ties that bind us together, and on the gladness of our common humanity, that therein He reveals Himself as able and glad to sanctify and elevate our joys and infuse into them a strange new fragrance and power. The 'water' of our ordinary lives is changed into 'wine.' Jesus became 'acquainted with grief' in order that He might impart to every believing and willing soul His own joy, and that by its remaining in us, our joy might be full.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA—THE WATER MADE WINE

'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.'—JOHN ii. 11.

The keynote of this Gospel was struck in the earlier verses of the first chapter in the great words, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.' To these words there is an evident reference in this language. The Evangelist regards Christ's first miracle as the first ray of that forth-flashing glory of the Incarnate Word. To this Evangelist all miracles are especially important as being *signs*, which is the word he generally employs to designate them. They are not mere portents, but significant revelations as well as wonders. It is not, I think, accidental that there are just seven miracles of our Lord's, before His crucifixion, recorded by John, and one of the Risen Lord.

These signs are all set forth by the Evangelist as manifestations of various aspects of that one white light, of uncreated glory which rays from Christ. They are, if I may so say, the sevenfold colours into which the one beam is analysed. Each of them might be looked at in turn as presenting some fresh thought of what the 'glory…full of grace and truth' is.

I begin with the first of the series. What, then, is the 'glory of the only Begotten Son' which flashes forth upon us from the miracle? My object is simply to try to answer that question for you.

I. First, then, we see here the revelation of His creative power.

It is very noteworthy that the miraculous fact is veiled entirely in the narrative. Not a word is said of the method of operation, it is not even said that the miracle was wrought; we are only told what preceded it, and what followed it. Itself is shrouded in deep silence. The servants fill the water-pots.—'Draw out now,' and they draw, 'and bear it to the governor of the feast.' Where the miraculous act comes in we do not know; what was its nature we cannot tell. How far it extended is left obscure. Was all the large quantity of water in these six great vessels of stone transformed into wine, or was the change effected in the moment when the portion that was wanted was drawn from them and on that portion only? We cannot answer the question. Probably, I think, the latter; but at all events a veil is dropped over the fact.

Only this, we see that in this miracle, even more conspicuously than in any other of our Lord's, there are no means at all employed. Sometimes He used material vehicles, anointing a man's eyes with clay, or moistening the ear with the spittle; sometimes sending a man to bathe in the Pool of Siloam; sometimes laying His hand on the sick; sometimes healing from a distance by the mere utterance of His word. But here there is not even a word; no means of any kind employed, but the silent forth-putting of His will, which, without token, without visible audible indication of any sort, passes with sovereign power into the midst of material things and there works according to His own purpose. Is not this the signature of divinity, that without means the mere forth-putting of the will is all that is wanted to mould

matter as plastic to His command? It is not even, 'He spake and it was done,' but silently He willed, and 'the conscious water knew its Lord, and blushed.' This is the glory of the Incarnate Word.

Now that was no interruption of the order of things established in the Creation. There was no suspension of natural laws here. What happened was only this, that the power which generally works through mediating links came into immediate connection with the effect. What does it matter whether your engine transmits its powers through half a dozen cranks, or two or three less? What does it matter whether the chain be longer or shorter? Some parenthetical links are dropped here, that is all that is unusual. For in all ordinary natural operations, as we call them, the profound prologue of this Gospel teaches us to believe that Christ, the Eternal Word, works according to His will. He was the Agent of creation. He is the Agent of that preservation which is only a continual creation. In Him is life, and all living things live because of the continual presence and operation upon them of His divine power. And again I say, what is phenomenal and unusual in this miracle is but the suppression of two or three of the connecting links between the continual cause of all creatural existences, and its effect. So let us learn that whether through a long chain of so-called causes, or whether close up against the effect, without the intervention of these parenthetical and transmitting media, the divine power works. The power is one, and the reason for the effect is one, that Christ ever works in the world, and is that Eternal Word, 'without whom was not anything made that was made.' 'This beginning of miracles did Christ… and manifested His glory.'

II. Then, again, we see here, I think, the revelation of one great purpose of our Lord's coming, to hallow all common, and especially all family, life.

What a strange contrast there is between the simple gladness of the rustic village wedding and the tremendous scene of the Temptation in the wilderness, which preceded it only by a few days! What a strange contrast there is between the sublime heights of the first chapter and the homely incident which opens the ministry! What a contrast between the rigid asceticism of the Forerunner, 'who came neither eating nor drinking,' and the Son of Man, who enters thus freely and cheerfully into the common joys and relationships of human nature! How unlike the scene at the marriage-feast must have been to the anticipations of the half-dozen disciples that had gathered round Him, all a-tingling with expectation as to what would be the first manifestation of His Messianic power! The last thing they would have dreamed of would have been to find Him in the humble home in Cana of Galilee. Some people say 'this miracle is unworthy of Him, for it was wrought upon such a trivial occasion.' And was it a trivial occasion that prompted Him thus to commence His career, not by some high and strained and remote exhibition of more than human saintliness or power, but by entering like a Brother into the midst of common, homespun, earthly joys, and showing how His presence ennobled and sanctified these? Surely the world has gained from Him, among the many gifts that He has given to it, few that have been the fountain of more sacred sweetness and blessedness than is opened in that fact that the first manifestation of His glory had for its result the hallowing of the marriage tie.

And is it not in accordance with the whole meaning and spirit of His works that 'forasmuch as the brethren were partakers of' anything, 'He Himself likewise should take part of the same,' and sanctify every incident of life by His sharing of it? So He protests

against that faithless and wicked division of life into sacred and secular, which has wrought such harm both in the sacred and in the secular regions. So He protests against the notion that religion has to do with another world rather than with this. So He protests against the narrowing conception of His work which would remove from its influence anything that interests humanity. So He says, as it were, at the very beginning of His career, 'I am a Man, and nothing that is human do I reckon foreign to Myself.'

Brethren! let us learn the lesson that all life is the region of His Kingdom; that the sphere of His rule is everything which a man can do or feel or think. Let us learn that where His footsteps have trod is hallowed ground. If a prince shares for a few moments in the festivities of his gathered people on some great occasion, how ennobled the feast seems! If he joins in their sports or in their occupations for a while as an act of condescension, how they return to them with renewed vigour! And so we. We have had our King in the midst of all our family life, in the midst of all our common duties; therefore are they consecrated. Let us learn that all things done with the consciousness of His presence are sacred. He has hallowed every corner of human life by His presence; and the consecration, like some pungent and perennial perfume, lingers for us yet in the else scentless air of daily life, if we follow His footsteps.

Sanctity is not singularity. There is no need to withdraw from any region of human activity and human interest in order to develop the whitest saintliness, the most Christlike purity. The saint is to be in the world, but not of it; like the Master, who went straight from the wilderness and its temptations to the homely gladness of the rustic marriage.

III. Still further, we have here a symbol of Christ's glory as the ennobler and heightener of all earthly joys.

That may be taken with perhaps a permissible play of fancy as one meaning, at any rate, of the transformation of water into wine; the less savoury and fragrant and powerful liquid into the more so. Wine, in the Old Testament especially, is the symbol of gladness, and though it received a deeper and a sacreder meaning in the New Testament as being the emblem of His blood shed for us, it is the Old Testament point of view that prevails here. And therefore, I say, we may read in the incident the symbol of His transforming power. He comes, the Man of Sorrows, with the gift of joy in His hand. It is not an unworthy object—not unworthy, I mean, of a divine sacrifice—to make men glad. It is worth His while to come from Heaven to agonise and to die, in order that He may sprinkle some drops of incorruptible and everlasting joy over the weary and sorrowful hearts of earth. We do not always give its true importance to gladness in the economy of our lives, because we are so accustomed to draw our joys from ignoble sources that in most of our joys there is something not altogether creditable or lofty. But Christ came to bring gladness, and to transform its earthly sources into heavenly fountains; and so to change all the less sweet, satisfying, and potent draughts which we take from earth's cisterns into the wine of the Kingdom; the new wine, strong and invigorating, 'making glad the heart of man.'

Our commonest blessings, our commonest joys, if only they be not foul and filthy, are capable of this transformation. Link them with Christ; be glad in Him. Bring Him into your mirth, and it will change its character. Like a taper plunged into a jar of oxygen, it will blaze up more brightly. Earth, at its best and highest, without Him is like some fair landscape

lying in the shadow; and when He comes to it, it is like the same scene when the sun blazes out upon it, flashes from every bend of the rippling river, brings beauty into many a shady corner, opens all the flowering petals and sets all the birds singing in the sky. The whole scene changes when a beam of light from Him falls upon earthly joys. He will transform them and ennoble them and make them perpetual. Do not meddle with mirth over which you cannot make the sign of the Cross and ask Him to bless it; and do not keep Him out of your gladness, or it will leave bitterness on your lips, howsoever sweet it tastes at first.

Ay! and not only can this Master transform the water at the marriage feast into the wine of gladness, but the cups that we all carry, into which our tears have dropped—upon these too He can lay His hand and change them into cups of blessing and of salvation.

'Blessed are they… who, passing through the valley of weeping, gather their tears into a well; the rain also covereth it with blessings.' So the old Psalm put the thought that sorrow may be turned into a solemn joy, and may lie at the foundation of our most flowery fruitfulness. And the same lesson we may learn from this symbol. The Christ who transforms the water of earthly gladness into the wine of heavenly blessedness, can do the same thing for the bitter waters of sorrow, and can make them the occasions of solemn joy. When the leaves drop we see through the bare branches. Shivering and cold they may look, but we see the stars beyond, and that is better. 'This beginning of miracles' will Jesus repeat in every sad heart that trusts itself to Him.

IV. And last of all, we have here a token of His glory as supplying the deficiencies of earthly sources.

'His mother saith unto Him, "They have no wine."' The world's banquet runs out, Christ supplies an infinite gift. These great water-pots that stood there, if the whole contents of them were changed, as is possible, contained far more than sufficient for the modest wants of the little company. The water that flowed from each of them, in obedience to the touch of the servant's hand, if the change were effected then, as is possible, would flow on so long as any thirsted or any asked. And Christ gives to each of us, if we choose, a fountain that will spring unto life eternal. And when the world's platters are empty, and the world's cups are all drained dry, He will feed and satisfy the immortal hunger and the blessed thirst of every spirit that longs for Him.

The rude speech of the governor of the feast may lend itself to another aspect of this same thought. He said, in jesting surprise, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now,' whereas the world gives its best first, and when the palate is dulled and the appetite diminished, then 'that which is worse.' How true that is; how tragically true in some of our lives! In the individual the early days of hope and vigour, when all things were fresh and wondrous, when everything was apparelled in the glory of a dream, contrast miserably with the bitter experiences of life that most of us have made. Habit comes, and takes the edge off everything. We drag remembrance, like a lengthening chain, through all our life; and with remembrance come remorse and regret. 'The vision splendid' no more attends men, as they plod on their way through the weariness of middle life, or pass down into the deepening shadows of advancing and solitary old age. The best comes first, for the men who have no good but this world's. And some of you have got nothing in your cups but dregs that you scarcely care to drink.

But Jesus Christ keeps the best till the last. His gifts become sweeter every day. No time can cloy them. Advancing years make them more precious and more necessary. The end is better in this course than the beginning. And when life is over, and we pass into the heavens, the word will come to our lips, with surprise and with thankfulness, as we find how much better it all is than we had ever dreamed it should be: 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

Oh, my brother! do not touch that cup that is offered to you by the harlot world, spiced and fragrant and foaming; 'at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' But take the pure joys which the Christ, loved, trusted, obeyed, summoned to your feast and welcomed in your heart, will bring to you; and these shall grow and greaten until the perfection of the Heavens.

CHRIST CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.'—JOHN ii. 16.

The other Evangelists do not record this cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Christ's ministry, but, as we all know, tell of a similar act at its very close. John, on the other hand, has no notice of the latter incident. The question, then, naturally arises, are these diverse narratives accounts of the same event? The answer seems to me to be in the negative, because John's Gospel is evidently intended to supplement the other three, and to record incidents either unknown to, or unnoticed by, them, and, as a matter of fact, the whole of this initial visit of our Lord to Jerusalem is omitted by the three Evangelists. Then the two incidents are distinctly different in tone, in setting, and in the words with which our Lord accompanies them. They are both appropriate in the place in which they stand, the one as the initial and the other as all but the final act of His Messiahship. So we may learn from the repetition of this cleansing the solemn lesson: that outward reformation of religious corruptions is of small and transient worth. For in three years—perhaps in as many weeks—the abuse that He corrected returned in full force.

Now, this narrative has many points of interest, but I think I shall best bring out its meaning if I remind you, by way of introduction, that the Temple of Jerusalem was succeeded by the Temple of the Christian Church, and that each individual Christian man is a temple. So there are three things that I want to set before you: what Christ did in the Temple; what He does in the Church; what He will do to each of us if we will let Him.

I. First, then, what Christ did in the Temple.

Now, the scene in our narrative is not unlike that which may be witnessed in any Roman Catholic country in the cathedral place or outside the church on the saint's day, where there are long rows of stalls, fitted up with rosaries, and images of the saint, and candles, and other apparatus for worship.

The abuse had many practical grounds on which it could be defended. It was very convenient to buy sacrifices on the spot, instead of having to drag them from a distance. It was no less convenient to be able to exchange foreign money, possibly bearing upon it the head of an emperor, for the statutory half-shekel. It was profitable to the sellers, and no doubt to the priests, who were probably sleeping partners in the concern, or drew rent for the ground on which the stalls stood. And so, being convenient for all and profitable to many, the thing became a recognised institution.

Being familiar it became legitimate, and no one thought of any incongruity in it until this young Nazarene felt a flash of zeal for the sanctity of His Father's house consuming Him. Catching up some of the reeds which served as bedding for the cattle, He twisted them into the semblance of a scourge, which could hurt neither man nor beast. He did not use it. It was a symbol, not an instrument. According to the reading adopted in the Revised Version, it was the sheep and cattle, not their owners, whom He 'drove out.' And then, dropping the

scourge, He turned to the money-changers, and, with the same hand, overthrew their tables. And then came the turn of the sellers of doves. He would not hurt the birds, nor rob their owners. And so He neither overthrew nor opened the cages, but bade them 'Take these things hence'; and then came the illuminating words, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.'

Now this incident is very unlike our Lord's usual method, even if we do not exaggerate the violence which He employed. It is unlike in two respects: in the use of compulsion, and in aiming at mere outward reformation. And both of these points are intimately connected with its place in His career.

It was the first public appearance of Jesus before His nation as Messiah. He inaugurates His work by a claim—by an act of authority—to be the King of Israel and the Lord of the Temple. If we remember the words from the last prophet, in which Malachi says that 'the Messenger of the Covenant…shall suddenly come to His Temple, and purify the sons of Levi,' we get the significance of this incident. We have to mark in it our Lord's deliberate assumption of the role of Messiah; His shaping His conduct so as to recall to all susceptible hearts that last utterance of prophecy, and to recognise the fact that at the beginning of His career He was fully conscious of His Son-ship, and inaugurated His work by the solemn appeal to the nation to recognise Him as their Lord.

And this is the reason, as I take it, why the anomalous incident is in its place at the beginning of His career no less than the repetition of it was at the close. And this is the explanation of the anomaly of the incident. It is His solemn, authoritative claiming to be God's Messenger, the Messiah long foretold.

Then, further, this incident is a singular manifestation of Christ's unique power. How did it come that all these sordid hucksters had not a word to say, and did not lift a finger in opposition, or that the Temple Guard offered no resistance, and did not try to quell the unseemly disturbance, or that the very officials, when they came to reckon with Him, had nothing harsher to say than, 'What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things'? No miracle is needed to explain that singular acquiescence. We see in lower forms many instances of a similar thing. A man ablaze with holy indignation, and having a secret ally in the hearts of those whom He rebukes, will awe a crowd even if he does not infect them. But that is not the full explanation. I see here an incident analogous to that strange event at the close of Christ's ministry, when, coming out from beneath the shadows of the olives in the garden, He said to the soldiers 'Whom seek ye?' and they fell backwards and wallowed on the ground. An overwhelming impression of His personal majesty, and perhaps some forth-putting of that hidden glory which did swim up to the surface on the mountain of Transfiguration, bowed all these men before Him, like reeds before the wind. And though there was no recognition of His claim, there was something in the Claimant that forbade resistance and silenced remonstrance.

Further, this incident is a revelation of Christ's capacity for righteous indignation. No two scenes can be more different than the two recorded in this chapter: the one that took place in the rural seclusion of Cana, nestling among the Galilean hills, the other that was done in the courts of the Temple swarming with excited festival-keepers; the one hallowing the common joys of daily life, the other rebuking the profanation of what assumed to be a great

deal more sacred than a wedding festival; the one manifesting the love and sympathy of Jesus, His power to ennoble all human relationships, and His delight in ministering to need and bringing gladness, and the other setting forth the sterner aspect of His character as consumed with holy zeal for the sanctity of God's name and house. Taken together, one may say that they cover the whole ground of His character, and in some very real sense are a summary of all His work. The programme contains the whole of what is to follow hereafter.

We may well take the lesson, which no generation ever needed more than the present, both by reason of its excellences and of its defects, that there were no love worthy of a perfect spirit in which there did not lie dormant a dark capacity of wrath, and that Christ Himself would not have been the Joy-bringer, the sympathising Gladdener which He manifested Himself as being in the 'beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee' unless, side by side, there had lain in Him the power of holy indignation and, if need be, of stern rebuke. Brethren, we must retain our conception of His anger if we are not to maim our conception of His love. There is no wrath like the wrath of the Lamb. The Temple court, with the strange figure of the Christ with a scourge in His hand, is a revelation which this generation, with its exaggerated sentimentalism, with its shrinking, by reason of its good and of its evil, from the very notion of a divine retribution based upon the eternal antagonism between good and evil, most sorely needs.

II. Now, secondly, notice what Christ does in His Church.

I need not remind you how God's method of restoration is always to restore with a difference and a progress. The ruined Temple on Zion was not to be followed by another house of stone and lime, but by 'a spiritual house,' builded together for 'a habitation of God in the Spirit.' The Christian Church takes the place of that material sanctuary, and is the dwelling-place of God.

That being so, let us take the lesson that that house, too, may be desecrated. There may be, as there were in the original Temple, the externals of worship, and yet, eating out the reality of these, there may be an inward mercenary spirit.

Note how insensibly such corruption creeps in to a community. You cannot embody an idea in a form or in an external association without immediately dragging it down, and running the risk of degradation. It is just like a drop of quicksilver which you cannot expose to the air but instantaneously its brightness is dimmed by the scum that forms on its surface. A church as an outward institution is exposed to all the dangers to which other institutions are exposed. And these creep on insensibly, as this abuse had crept on. So it is not enough that we should be at ease in our consciences in regard to our practices as Christian communities. We become familiar with any abuse, and as we become familiar we lose the power of rightly judging of it. Therefore conscience needs to be guided and enlightened quite as much as to be obeyed.

How long has it taken the Christian Church to learn the wickedness of slavery? Has the Christian Church yet learned the unchristianity of War? Are there no abuses amongst us, which subsequent generations will see to be so glaring that they will talk about us as we talk about our ancestors, and wonder whether we were Christians at all when we could

tolerate such things? They creep on gradually, and they need continual watchfulness if they are not to assume the mastery.

The special type of corruption which we find in this incident is one that besets the Church always. Of course, if I were preaching to ministers, I should have a great deal to say about that. For men that are necessarily paid for preaching have a sore temptation to preach for pay. But it is not only we professionals who have need to lay to heart this incident. It is all Christian communities, established and non-established churches, Roman Catholic and Protestant. The same danger besets them all. There must be money to work the outward business of the house of God. But what about people that 'run' churches as they run mills? What about people whose test of the prosperity of a Christian community is its balance-sheet? What about the people that hang on to religious communities and services for the sake of what they can make out of them? We have heard a great deal lately about what would happen 'if Christ came to Chicago.' If Christ came to any community of professing Christians in this land, do you not think He would need to have the scourge in His hand, and to say 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'? He will come; He does come; He is always coming if we would listen to Him. And at long intervals He comes in some tremendous and manifest fashion, and overthrows the money-changers' tables.

Ah, brethren! if Jesus Christ had not thus come, over and over again, to His Church, Christian men would have killed Christianity long ago. Did you ever think that Christianity is the only religion that has shown recuperative power and that has been able to fling off its peccant humours? They used to say—I do not know whether it is true or not—that Thames water was good to put on board ship because of its property of corrupting and then clearing itself, and becoming fit to drink. We and our brethren, all through the ages, have been corrupting the Water of Life. And how does it come to be sweet and powerful still? This tree has substance in it when it casts its leaves. That unique characteristic of Christianity, its power of reformation, is not self-reformation, but it is a coming of the Lord to His temple to 'purify the sons of Levi, that their offering may be pleasant as in days of yore.'

So one looks upon the spectacle of churches labouring under all manner of corruptions; and one need not lose heart. The shortest day is the day before the year turns; and when the need is sorest the help is nearest. And so I, for my part, believe that very much of the organisations of all existing churches will have to be swept away. But I believe too, with all my heart—and I hope that you do—that, though the precious wheat is riddled in the sieve, and the chaff falls to the ground, not one grain will go through the meshes. Whatever becomes of churches, the Church of Christ shall never have its strength so sapped by abuses that it must perish, or its lustre so dimmed that the Lord of the Temple must depart from His sanctuary.

III. Lastly, note what Christ will do for each of us if we will let Him.

It is not a community only which is the temple of God. For the Apostles in many places suggest, and in some distinctly say, 'ye are the temples' individually, as well as the Temple collectively, of the Most High. And so every Christian soul—by virtue of that which is the deepest truth of Christianity, the indwelling of Christ in men's hearts by faith—is a temple

of God; and every human soul is meant to be and may become such. That temple can be profaned. There are many ways in which professing Christians make it a house of merchandise. There are forms of religion which are little better than chaffering with God, to give Him so much service if He will repay us with so much Heaven. There are too many temptations, to which we yield, to bring secular thoughts into our holiest things. Some of us, by reason not of wishing wealth but of dreading penury, find it hard to shut worldly cares out of our hearts. We all need to be on our guard lest the atmosphere in which we live in this great city shall penetrate even into our moments of devotion, and the noise of the market within earshot of the Holy of Holies shall disturb the chant of the worshippers. It is Manchester's temptation, and it is one that most of us need to be guarded against.

So engrossed, and, as we should say, necessarily engrossed—or, at all events, legitimately engrossed—are we in the pursuits of our daily commerce, that we have scarcely time enough or leisure of heart and mind enough to come into 'the secret place of the Most High.' The worshippers stop outside trading for beasts and doves, and they have no time to go into the Temple and present their offerings.

It is our besetting danger. Forewarned is forearmed, to some extent. Would that we could all hear, as we go about our ordinary avocations, that solemn voice, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise,' and could keep the inner sanctuary still from the noises, and remote from the pollutions, of the market hard by!

We cannot cast out these or any other desecrating thoughts and desires by ourselves, except to a very small degree. And if we do, then there happens what our Lord warned us against in profound words. The house may be emptied of the evil tenant in some measure by our own resolution and self-reformation. But if it is not occupied by Him, it remains 'empty,' though it is 'swept and garnished.' Nature abhors a vacuum, and into the empty house there come the old tenant and seven brethren blacker than himself. The only way to keep the world out of my heart is to have Christ filling it. If we will ask Him He will come to us. And if He has the scourge in His hand, let Him be none the less welcome a guest for that. He will come, and when He enters, it will be like the rising of the sun, when all the beasts of the forest slink away and lay them down in their dens. It will be like the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of the whole earth into the temple of Dagon, when the fish-like image fell prone and mutilated on the threshold. If we say to Him, 'Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength,' He will enter in, and by His entrance will 'make the place of His feet glorious' and pure.

THE DESTROYERS AND THE RESTORER

'Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'—JOHN ii. 19.

This is our Lord's answer to the Jewish request for a sign which should warrant His action in cleansing the Temple. There are two such cleansings recorded in the Gospels; this one His first public act, and another, omitted by John, but recorded in the other Gospels, which was almost His last public act.

It has been suggested that these are but two versions of one incident; and although there is no objection in principle to admitting the possibility of that explanation, yet in fact it appears to me insufficient and unnecessary. For each event is appropriate in its own place. In each there is a distinct difference in tone. The incident recorded in the present chapter has our Lord's commentary, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'; in that recorded in the Synoptic Gospels the profanation is declared as greater, and the rebuke is more severe. The 'house of merchandise' has become, by their refusal to render to Him what was His, 'a den of thieves.' In the later incident there is a reference in our Lord's quotation from the Old Testament to the entrance of the Gentiles into the Kingdom. There is no such reference here. In the other Gospels there is no record of this question which the Jews asked, nor of our Lord's significant answer, whilst yet a caricatured and mistaken version of that answer was known to the other Evangelists, and is put by them into the mouths of the false witnesses at our Lord's trial. They thus attest the accuracy of our narrative even while they seem not to have known of the incident.

All these things being taken into account, I think that we have to do with a double, of which there are several instances in the Gospels, the same event recurring under somewhat varied circumstances, and reflecting varied aspects of truth. But it is to our Lord's words in vindication of His right to cleanse the Temple rather than to the incident on which they are based that I wish to turn your attention now: 'Destroy this Temple,' said our Lord, as His sufficient and only answer to the demand for a sign, 'and in three days I will raise it up.'

Now these words, enigmatical as they are, seem to me to be very profound and significant; and I wish, on this Easter Sunday, to look at them as throwing a light upon the gladness of this day. They suggest to me three things: I find in them, first, an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history; second, a prophetic warning of Israel's; and last, a symbolical foreshadowing of His world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

I. First then, I think, we see here an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history.

Notice, first, that marvellous and unique consciousness of our Lord's as to His own dignity and nature. 'He spake of the temple of His body.' Think that here is a man, apparently one of ourselves, walking amongst us, living the common life of humanity, who declares that in Him, in an altogether solitary and peculiar fashion, there abides the fulness of Deity. Think that there has been a Man who said, 'In this place is One greater than the

Temple.' And people have believed Him, and do believe Him, and have found that the tremendous audacity of the words is simple verity, and that Christ is, in inmost reality, all which the Temple was but in the poorest symbol. In it there had dwelt, though there dwelt no longer at the time when He was speaking, a material and symbolical brightness, the expression of something which, for want of a better name, we call the 'presence of God.' But what was that flashing fire between the cherubim that brooded over the Mercy-seat, with a light that was lambent and lustrous as the light of love and of life—what was that to the glory, moulded in meekness and garbed in gentleness, the glory that shone, merciful and hospitable and inviting—a tempered flame on which the poorest, diseased, blind eyes could look, and not wince—from the face and from the character of Jesus Christ the Lord? He is greater than the Temple, for in Him, in no symbol but in reality, abode and abides the fulness of that unnameable Being whom we name Father and God. And not only does the fulness abide, but in Him that awful Remoteness becomes for us a merciful Presence; the infinite abyss and closed sea of the divine nature hath an outlet, and becomes a 'river of water of life.' And as the ancient name of that Temple was the 'Tent of Meeting,' the place where Israel and God, in symbolical and ceremonial form, met together, so, in inmost reality in Christ's nature, Manhood and Divinity cohere and unite, and in Him all of us, the weak, the sinful, the alien, the rebellious, may meet our Father. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.'

And so this Jewish Peasant, at the very beginning of His earthly career, stands up there, in the presence of the ancestral sanctities and immemorial ceremonials which had been consecrated by all these ages and commanded by God Himself, and with autocratic hand sweeps them all on one side, as one that should draw a curtain that the statue might be seen, and remains poised Himself in the vacant place, that all eyes may look upon Him, and on Him alone. 'Destroy this Temple…. He spake of the temple of His body.'

Still further, notice how here we have, at the very beginning of our Lord's career, His distinct prevision of how it was all going to end. People that are willing to honour Jesus Christ, and are not willing to recognise His death as the great purpose for which He came, tell us that, like as with other reformers and heroes and martyrs, His death was the result of the failure of His purpose. And some of them talk to us very glibly, in their so-called 'Lives of Jesus Christ' about the alteration in Christ's plan which came when He saw that His message was not going to be received. I do not enter upon all the reasons why such a construction of Christ's work cannot hold water, but here is one—for any one who believes this story before us—that at the very beginning, before He had gone half a dozen steps in His public career, when the issues of the experiment, if it was a man that was making the experiment, were all untried; when, if it were merely a martyr-enthusiast that was beginning his struggle, some flickering light of hope that He would be received of His brethren must have shone, or He would never have ventured upon the path—that then, with no mistake, with no illusion, with no expectation of a welcome and a Hosanna, but with the clearest certitude of what lay before Him, our Lord *beheld* and accepted His Cross. Its shadow fell upon His path from the beginning, because the Cross was the purpose for which He came. 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,' said He—when the reality of it was almost within arm's length of Him—'to bear witness to the Truth,' and His bearing witness to the truth was perfected and accomplished on the Cross.

Here, at the very commencement of His career, we have it distinctly set forth, 'the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.'

And, brethren, that fact is important, not only because it helps us to understand that His death is the centre of His work, but also because it helps us to a loving and tender thought of Him, how all His life long, with that issue distinctly before Him, He journeyed towards it of His own loving will; how every step that He took on earth's flinty roads, taken with bleeding and pure feet, He took knowing whither He was going. This Isaac climbs the mountain to the place of sacrifice, with no illusions as to what He is going up the mountain for. He knows that He goes up to be the lamb of the offering, and knowing it, He goes. Therefore let us love Him with love as persistent as was His own, who discerning the end from the beginning, willed to be born and to live because He had resolved to die, for you and me and every man.

And then, further, we have here our Lord's claim to be Himself the Agent of His own resurrection. '*I* will raise it up in three days.' Of course, in Scripture, we more frequently find the Resurrection treated as being the result of the power of God the Father. We more ordinarily read that Christ was raised; but sometimes we read, as here, that Christ rises, and we have solemn words of His own, 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Think of a man saying, 'I am going to bring My own body from the dust of death,' and think of the man who said that *doing* it. If that is true, if this prediction was uttered, and being uttered was fulfilled—what then? I do not need to answer the question. My brother, this day declares that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 'Destroy this Temple'—there is a challenge—'and in three days I will raise it up'; and He did it. And He is the Lord of the Temple as well as the Temple. Down on your knees before Him, with all your hearts and with all your confidence, and worship, and trust, and love for evermore 'the Second Man,' who 'is the Lord from Heaven!'

II. Now let us turn to the other aspects of these words. I think we see here, in the next place, a prophetic warning of the history of the men to whom He was speaking.

There must be a connection between the interpretation of the words which our Evangelist assures us is the correct one, and the interpretation which would naturally have occurred to a listener, that by 'this Temple' our Lord really meant simply the literal building in which He spoke. There is such a connection, and though our Lord did not only mean the Temple, He *did* mean the Temple. To say so is not forcing double meanings in any fast and loose fashion upon Scripture, nor playing with ambiguities, nor indulging in any of the vices to which spiritualising interpretation of Scripture leads, but it is simply grasping the central idea of the words of my text. Rightly understood they lead us to this: 'The death of Christ was the destruction of the Jewish Temple and polity, and the raising again of Christ from the dead on the third day was the raising again of that destroyed Theocracy and Temple in a new and nobler fashion.' Let us then look for a moment, and it shall only be for a moment, at these two thoughts.

If any one had said to any of that howling mob that stood round Christ at the judgment-seat of the High Priest, and fancied themselves condemning Him to death, because He had blasphemed the Temple: 'You, at this moment, are pulling down the holy and beautiful house in which your fathers praised; and what you are doing now is the destruction of your

national worship and of yourselves,' the words would have been received with incredulity; and yet they were simple truth. Christ's death destroyed that outward Temple. The veil was 'rent in twain from the top to the bottom' at the moment He died; which was the declaration indeed that henceforward the Holiest of All was patent to the foot of every man, but was also the declaration that there was no more sanctity now within those courts, and that Temple, and priesthood, and sacrifice, and altar, and ceremonial and all, were antiquated. That 'which was perfect having come,' Christ's death having realised all which Temple-worship symbolised, that which was the shadow was put away when the substance appeared.

And in another fashion, it is also true that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, inflicted by Jewish hands, was the destruction of the Jewish worship, in the way of natural sequence and of divine chastisement. When the husbandmen rejected the Son who was sent 'last of all,' there was nothing more for it but that they should be 'cast out of the vineyard,' and the firebrand which the Roman soldier, forty years afterwards, tossed into the Holiest of All, and which burned the holy and beautiful house with fire, was lit on the day when Israel cried 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'

Oh, brethren! What a lesson it is to us all of how blind even so-called religious zeal may be; how often it is true that men in their madness and their ignorance destroy the very institutions which they are trying to conserve! How it warns us to beware lest we, unknowing what we are about, and thinking that we are fighting for the honour of God, may really all the while be but serving ourselves and rejecting His message and His Messenger!

And then let me remind you that another thing is also true, that just as the Jewish rejection of Christ was their own rejection as the people of God, and their attempted destruction of Christ the destruction of the Jewish Temple, so the other side of the truth is also here, viz. that His rising again is the restoration of the destroyed Temple in nobler and fairer form. Of course the one real Temple is the body of Jesus Christ, as we have said, where sacrifice is offered, where God dwells, where men meet with God. But in a secondary and derivative sense, in the place of the Jewish Temple has come the Christian Church, which is, in a far deeper and more inward fashion, what that ancient system aspired to be.

Christ has builded up the Church on His Resurrection. On His Resurrection, I say, for there is nothing else on which it could rest. If men ask me what is the great evidence of Christ's Resurrection, my answer is—the existence in the world of a Church. Where did it come from? How is it possible to conceive that without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ such a structure as the Christian society should have been built upon a dead man's grave? It would have gone to pieces, as all similar associations would have gone. What had happened after that moment of depression which scattered them every man to his own, and led some of them to say, with pathetic use of the past tense to describe their vanished expectations, 'We *trusted* that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel'? What was the force that instead of driving them asunder drew them together? What was the power that, instead of quenching their almost dead hopes, caused them to flame up with renewed vigour heaven-high? How came it that that band of cowardly, dispirited Jewish peasants, who scattered in selfish fear and heart-sick disappointment, were in a few days found bearding all antagonism, and convinced that their hopes had only erred by being too faint

and dim? The only answer is in their own message, which explained it all: 'Him hath God raised from the dead, whereof we are all witnesses.'

The destroyed Temple disappears, and out of the dust and smoke of the vanishing ruins there rises, beautiful and serene, though incomplete and fragmentary and defaced with many a stain, the fairer reality, the Church of the living Christ. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

III. Lastly, we have here a foreshadowing of our Lord's world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions.

Man's folly, godlessness, worldliness, lust, sin, are ever working to the destruction of all that is sacred in humanity and in life, and to the desecrating of every shrine. We ourselves, in regard to our own hearts, which are made to be the temples of the 'living God,' are ever, by our sins, shortcomings, and selfishness, bringing pollution into the holiest of all; 'breaking down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers,' and setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy places of our hearts. We pollute them all—conscience, imagination, memory, will, intellect. How many a man listening to me now has his nature like the facade of some of our cathedrals, with the empty niches and broken statues proclaiming that wanton desecration and destruction have been busy there?

My brother! what have you done with your heart? 'Destroy this temple.' Christ spoke to men who did not know what they were doing; and He speaks to you. It is the inmost meaning of the life of many of you. Hour by hour, day by day, action by action, you are devastating and profaning the sanctities of your nature, and the sacred places there where God ought to live.

Listen to His confident promise. He knows that in me He is able to restore to more than pristine beauty all which I, by my sin, have destroyed; to reconsecrate all which I, by my profanity, have polluted; to cast out the evil deities that desecrate and deform the shrine; and to make my poor heart, if only I will let Him come in to the ruined chamber, a fairer temple and dwelling-place of God.

'In three days,' does He do it? In one sense—Yes! Thank God! the power that hallows and restores the desecrated and cast-down temple in a man's heart, was lodged in the world in those three days of death and resurrection. The fact that He 'died for our sins,' the fact that He was 'raised again for our justification,' are the plastic and architectonic powers which will build up any character into a temple of God.

And yet more than 'forty and six years' will that temple have to be 'in building.' It is a lifelong task till the top-stone be brought forth. Only let us remember this: Christ, who is Architect and Builder, Foundation and Top-stone; ay! and Deity indwelling in the temple, and building it by His indwelling—this Christ is not one of those who 'begin to build and are not able to finish.' He realises all His plans. There are no ruined edifices in 'the City'; nor any half-finished fanes of worship within the walls of that great Jerusalem whose builder and maker is Christ.

If you will put yourselves in His hands, and trust yourselves to Him, He will take away all your incompleteness, and will make you body, soul, and spirit, temples of the Lord God; as far above the loftiest beauty and whitest sanctity of any Christian character here on earth

as is the building of God, 'the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' above 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.'

He will perfect this restoring work at the last, when His Word to His servant Death, as He points him to us, shall be 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up.'

TEACHER OR SAVIOUR?

'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.'—JOHN iii. 2.

The connection in which the Evangelist introduces the story of Nicodemus throws great light on the aspect under which we are to regard it. He has just been saying that upon our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem at the Passover there was a considerable amount of interest excited, and a kind of imperfect faith in Him drawn out, based solely on His miracles. He adds that this faith was regarded by Christ as unreliable; and he goes on to explain that our Lord exercised great reserve in His dealings with the persons who professed it, for the reason that 'He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.'

Now, if you note that reiteration of the word 'man,' you will understand the description which is given of the person who is next introduced. 'He knew what was in man. There was a *man* of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' It would have been enough to have said, 'There was a Pharisee.' When John says 'a *man* of the Pharisees,' he is not merely carried away by the echo in his ears of his own last words, but it is as if he had said, 'Now, here is one illustration of the sort of thing that I have been speaking about; one specimen of an imperfect faith built upon miracles; and one illustration of the way in which Jesus Christ dealt with it.'

Nicodemus was 'a Pharisee.' That tells us the school to which he belonged, and the general drift of his thought. He was 'a ruler of the Jews.' That tells us that he held an official position in the supreme court of the nation, to which the Romans had left some considerable shadow of power in ecclesiastical matters. And this man comes to Christ and acknowledges Him. Christ deals with him in a very suggestive fashion. His confession, and the way in which our Lord received it, are what I desire to consider briefly in this sermon.

I. Note then, first, this imperfect confession.

Everything about it, pretty nearly, is wrong. 'He came to Jesus by night,' half-ashamed and wholly afraid of speaking out the conviction that was working in him. He was a man in position. He could not compromise himself in the eyes of his co-Sanhedrists. 'It would be a grave thing for a man like me to be found in converse with this new Rabbi and apparent Prophet. I must go cautiously, and have regard to my reputation and my standing in the world; and shall steal to Him by night.' There is something wrong with any convictions about Jesus Christ which let themselves be huddled up in secret. The true apprehension of Him is like a fire in a man's bones, that makes him 'weary of forbearing' when he locks his lips, and forces him to speak. If Christians can be dumb, there is something dreadfully wrong with their Christianity. If they do not regard Jesus Christ in such an aspect as to oblige them to stand out in the world and say, 'Whatever anybody says or thinks about it, I am Christ's man,' then be sure that they do not yet know Him as they ought to do.

Nicodemus 'came to Jesus by night,' and therein condemned himself. He said, 'Rabbi, we know.' There is more than a *soupcon* of patronage in that. He is giving Jesus Christ a certificate, duly signed and sealed by Rabbinical authority. He evidently thinks that it is no small matter that he and some of his fellows should have been disposed to look with favour upon this new Teacher. And so he comes, if not patronising the young man, at all events extremely conscious of his own condescension in recognising Him with his 'We know.'

Had he the right to speak for any of his colleagues? If so, then at that very early stage of our Lord's ministry there was a conviction beginning to work in that body of ecclesiastics which casts a very lurid light on their subsequent proceedings. It was a good long while after, when Jesus Christ's attitude towards them had been a little more clearly made out than it was at the beginning, that they said officially, 'As for this fellow, we know not whence He is.' They 'knew' when He did not seem to be trenching on their prerogatives, or driving His Ithuriel-spear through their traditional professions of orthodoxy and punctilious casuistries. But when He trod on their toes, when He ripped up their pretensions, when He began to show His antagonism to their formalism and traditionalism, *then* they did not know where He came from. And there are many of us who are very polite to Jesus Christ as long as He does not interfere with us, and who begin to doubt His authority when He begins to rebuke our sins.

The man that said 'We know,' and then proceeded to tell Christ the grounds upon which He was accepted by him, was not in the position which becomes sinful men drawing near to their Saviour. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher'—contrast that, with its ring of complacency, and, if not superior, at least co-ordinate, authority, with 'Jesus! Master! have mercy on me,' or with 'Lord! save or I perish,' and you get the difference between the way in which a formalist, conceited of his knowledge, and a poor, perishing sinner, conscious of his ignorance and need, go to the Saviour.

Further, this imperfect confession was of secondary value, because it was built altogether upon miraculous evidence. Now, there has been a great deal of exaggeration about the value of the evidence of miracle. The undue elevation to which it was lifted in the apologetic literature of the eighteenth century, when it was almost made out as if there was no other proof that Jesus came from God than that He wrought miracles, has naturally led, in this generation and in the last one, to an equally exaggerated undervaluing of its worth. Jesus Christ did appeal to signs; He did also most distinctly place faith that rested merely upon miracle as second best; when He said, for instance, 'If ye believe not Me, yet believe the works.' Nicodemus says, 'We know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God, because no man can do these miracles except God be with him.' Ah! Nicodemus! did not the substance of the teaching reveal the source of the teaching even more completely than the miracles that accompanied it? Surely, if I may use an old illustration, the bell that rings in to the sermon (which is the miracles) is less conclusive as to the divine source of the teaching than is the sermon itself. Christ Himself is His own best evidence, and His words shine in their own light, and need no signs in order to authenticate their source. The signs are there, and are precious in my eyes less as credentials of His authority than as revelations of His character and His work. They are wonders; that is much. They are proofs; as I believe. But, high above both of these characteristics, they are signs of the spiritual work that He does, and manifestations of His redeeming power. And so a faith that had no ears for the ring of

the divine voice in the words, and no eyes for the beauty and perfection of the character, was vulgar and low and unreliable, inasmuch as it could give no better reason for itself than that Jesus had wrought miracles,

I need not remind you of how noticeable it is that at this very early stage in our Lord's ministry there were a sufficient number of miracles done to be qualified by the Evangelist as 'many,' and to have been a very powerful factor in bringing about this real, though imperfect, faith. John has only told us of one miracle prior to this; and the other Evangelists do not touch upon these early days of our Lord's ministry at all. So that we are to think of a whole series of works of power and supernatural grace which have found no record in these short narratives. How much more Jesus Christ was, and did, and said, than any book can ever tell! These are but parts of His ways; a whisper of His power. The fulness of it remains unrevealed after all revelation.

But the central deficiency of this confession lies in the altogether inadequate conception of Jesus Christ and His work which it embodies. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher, a miracle-worker, a man sent from God, and in communion with Him.' These are large recognitions, far too large to be spoken of any but a select few of the sons of men. But they fall miserably beneath the grandeur, and do not even approach within sight of the central characteristic, of Christ and of His work. Nicodemus is the type of large numbers of men nowadays. All the people that have a kind of loose, superficial connection with Christianity re-echo substantially his words. They compliment Jesus Christ out of His divinity and out of His redeeming work, and seem to think that they are rather conferring an honour upon Christianity when they condescend to say, 'We, the learned pundits of literature; we, the arbiters of taste; we, the guides of opinion; we, the writers in newspapers and magazines and periodicals; we, the leaders in social and philanthropic movements—we recognise that Thou art a Teacher.' Yes, brethren, and the recognition is utterly inadequate to the facts of the case, and is insult, and not recognition.

II. Let me ask you to look now, in the next place, at the way in which Jesus Christ deals with this imperfect confession.

It was a great thing for a young Rabbi from Nazareth, who had no certificate from the authorities, to find an opening thus into the very centre of the Sanhedrim. There is nothing in life, to an ardent young soul, at the beginning of his career—especially if he feels that he has a burden laid upon him to deliver to his fellows—half so sweet as the early recognition by some man of wisdom and weight and influence, that he too is a messenger from God. In later years praise and acknowledgment cloy. And one might have expected some passing word from the Master that would have expressed such a feeling as that, if He had been only a young Teacher seeking for recognition. I remember that in that strange medley of beauty and absurdity, the Koran, somewhere or other, there is an outpouring of Mahomet's heart about the blessedness of his first finding a soul that would believe in him. And it is strange that Jesus Christ had no more welcome for this man than the story tells that He had. For He meets him without a word of encouragement; without a word that seemed to recognise even a growing and a groping confidence, and yet He would not 'quench the smoking flax.' Yes! sometimes the kindest way to deal with an imperfect conception is to show unsparingly why it is imperfect; and sometimes the apparent repelling of a partial faith is truly the drawing to Himself by the Christ of the man, though his faith be not approved.

So, notice how our Lord meets the imperfections of this acknowledgment. He begins by pointing out what is the deepest and universal need of men. Nicodemus had said, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.' And Christ says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again.' What has that to do with Nicodemus's acknowledgment? Apparently nothing; really everything. For, if you will think for a moment, you will see how it meets it precisely, and forces the Rabbi to deepen his conception of the Lord. The first thing that you and I want, for our participation in the Kingdom of God, is a radical out-and-out change in our whole character and nature. 'Ye must be born again'; now, whatever more that means, it means, at all events, this—a thorough-going renovation and metamorphosis of a man's nature, as the sorest need that the world and all the individuals that make up the world have.

The deepest ground of that necessity lies in the fact of sin. Brother, we can only verify our Lord's assertion by honestly searching the depths of our own hearts, and looking at ourselves in the light of God. Think what is meant when we say, 'He is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' Think of that absolute purity, that, to us, awful aversion from all that is evil, from all that is sinful. Think of what sort of men they must be who can see the Lord. And then look at yourself. Are we fit to pass that threshold? Are we fit to gaze into that Face? Is it possible that we should have fellowship with Him? Oh, brethren, if we rightly meditate upon two facts, the holiness of God and our own characters, I think we shall feel that Jesus Christ has truly stated the case when He says, 'Ye must be born again.' Unless you and I can get ourselves radically changed, there is no Heaven for us; there is no fellowship with God for us. We must stand before Him, and feel that a great gulf is fixed between us and Him.

And so when a man comes with his poor little 'Thou art a Teacher,' no words are wanted in order to set in glaring light the utter inadequacy of such a conception as that. What the world wants is not a Teacher, it is a Life-giver. What men want is not to be told the truth; they know it already. What they want is not to be told their duty; they know that too. What they want is some power that shall turn them clean round. And what each of us wants before we can see the Lord is that, if it may be, something shall lay hold of us, and utterly change our natures, and express from our hearts the black drop that lies there tainting everything.

Now, this necessity is met in Jesus Christ. For there were two 'musts' in His talk with Nicodemus, and both of them bore directly on the one purpose of deepening Nicodemus's inadequate conception of what He was and what He did. He said, 'Ye must be born again,' in order that his hearer, and we, might lay to heart this, that we need something more than a Teacher, even a Life-giver; and He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' in order that we might all know that in Him the necessity is met, and that the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven, and is in Heaven, even whilst He is on earth, is the sole ladder by which men can ascend into Heaven and gaze upon God.

Thus it is Christ's work as Redeemer, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, Christ's power as bringing to the world a new and holy life, and breathing it into all that trust in Him, which make the very centre of His work. Set by the side of that this other, 'Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' Ah, brethren, that will not do; it will not do for you and me! We want something a great deal deeper than that. The secret of Jesus is not disclosed until we have passed into

the inner shrine, where we learn that He is the Sacrifice for the world, and the Source and Fountain of a new life. I beseech you, take Christ's way of dealing with this certificate of His character given by the Rabbi who did not know his own necessities, and ponder it.

Mark the underlying principle which is here—viz. if you want to understand Christ you must understand sin; and whoever thinks lightly of it will think meanly of Him. An underestimate of the reality, the universality, the gravity of the fact of sin lands men in the superficial and wholly impotent conception, 'Rabbi! Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' A true knowledge of myself as a sinful man, of my need of pardon, of my need of cleansing, of my need of a new nature, which must be given from above, and cannot be evolved from within, leads me, and I pray it may lead you, to cast yourself down before Him, with no complaisant words of intellectual recognition upon your lips, but with the old cry, 'Lord! be merciful to me a sinner.'

III. And now, dear friends, one last word. Notice when and where this imperfect disciple was transformed into a courageous confessor.

We do not know what came immediately of this conversation. We only know that some considerable time after, Nicodemus had not screwed himself up to the point of acknowledging out and out, like a brave man, that he was Christ's follower; but that he timidly ventured in the Sanhedrim to slip in a remonstrance ingeniously devised to conceal his own opinions, and yet to do some benefit to Christ, when he said, 'Does our law judge any man before it hear him?' And, of course, the timid remonstrance was swept aside, as it deserved to be, by the ferocious antagonism of his co-Sanhedrists.

But when the Cross came, and it had become more dangerous to avow discipleship, he plucked up courage, or rather courage flowed into him from that Cross, and he went boldly and 'craved the body of Jesus,' and got it, and buried it. No doubt when he looked at Jesus hanging on the Cross, he remembered that night in Jerusalem when the Lord had said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' and he remembered how He had spoken about the serpent lifted in the wilderness, and a great light blazed in upon him, which for ever ended all hesitation and timidity for him. And so he was ready to be a martyr, or anything else, for the sake of Him whom he now found to be far more than a 'Teacher,' even the Sacrifice by whose stripes he was healed.

Dear brethren, I bring that Cross to you now, and pray you to see there Christ's real work for us, and for the world. He has taught us, but He has done more. He has not only spoken, He has died. He has not only shown us the path on which to walk, He has made it possible for us to walk in it. He is not merely one amongst the noble band that have guided and inspired and instructed humanity, but He stands alone—not *a* Teacher, but *the* Redeemer, 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.'

If He is a Teacher, take His teachings, and what are they? These, that He is the Son of God; that 'He came from God'; that He 'went to God'; that He 'gives His life a ransom for many'; that He is to be the Judge of mankind; that if we trust in Him, our sins are forgiven and our nature is renewed. Do not go picking and choosing amongst His teachings, for these which I have named are as surely His as 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' or any other of the moral teachings which the world professes to admire. Take the whole teachings of the whole Christ, and you will confess Him to be the Redeemer

of your souls, and the Life-giver by whom, and by whom alone, we enter the Kingdom of God.

WIND AND SPIRIT

'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and them hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'—JOHN iii. 8.

Perhaps a gust of night wind swept round the chamber where Nicodemus sat listening to Jesus, and gave occasion for this condensed parable. But there is occasion sufficient for it in the word 'Spirit,' which, both in the language in which our Lord addressed the ruler of the Sanhedrim, and in that which John employed in recording the conversation, as in our own English, means both 'spirit' and 'breath.' This double signification of the word gives rise to the analogies in our text, and it also raises the question as to the precise meaning of the text. There are two alternatives, one adopted by our Authorised and Revised Version, and one which you will find relegated to the margin of the latter. We may either read 'the wind bloweth' or 'the Spirit breathes.' I must not be tempted here to enter into a discussion of the grounds upon which the one or the other of these two renderings may be preferred. Suffice it to say that I adhere to the rendering which lies before us, and find here a comparison between the salient characteristics of the physical fact and the operations of the Divine Spirit upon men's spirits.

But then, there is another step to be taken. Our Lord has just been laying down the principle that like begets like, that flesh produces flesh, and spirit, spirit. And so, applying that principle, He says here, not as might be expected, 'So is the work of the Divine Spirit in begetting new life in men,' but 'So is he that is born of the Spirit.' There are three things brought into relation with one another: the physical fact; the operations of the Spirit of God, of which that physical fact in its various characteristics may be taken as a symbol; and the result of its operations in the new man who is made 'after the image of Him that created him.'

It is to the last of these that I wish to turn. Here you have the ideal of the Christian life, considered as the product of the free Spirit of God, the picture of what all Christian people have the capacity of being, the obligation to be, and are, just in the measure in which that new life, which the Spirit of God bestows, is dominant in them and moulding their character. So I take these characteristics just as they arise.

I. Here you have the freedom of the new life.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Of course, in these days of weather forecasts and hoisting cones, we know that the wind is subject to as rigid physical laws as any other phenomena. But Jesus Christ speaks here, as the Bible always speaks about Nature, from two points of view—one the popular, regarding the thing as it looks on the surface, and the other what I may call the poetico-devout—finding 'sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,' and hints of the spiritual world in all the phenomena of the natural. So, just as in spite of meteorological science, there has passed into common speech the proverbial simile 'as free as the wind,' so Jesus Christ says here, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, … so is

every one that is born of the Spirit.' He passes by the intermediate link, the Spirit that is the parent of the life, and deals with the resulting life and declares that it is self-impelled and self-directed. Is that a characteristic to be desired or admired? Is doing as we list precisely the description of the noblest life? It is the description of the purely animal one. It is the description of an entirely ignoble and base one. It may become the description of an atrociously criminal one. But we do not generally think that a man that says 'Thus I will; thus I command; let the fact that I will it stand in the place of all reason,' is speaking from a lofty point of view.

But there are two sorts of 'listing.' There is the listing which is the yielding to the mob of ignoble passions and clamant desires of the animal nature within us, and there is the 'listing' which is obeying the impulses of a higher will, that has been blended with ours. And there you come to the secret of true freedom, which does not consist in doing as I like, but in liking to do as God wishes me to do. When our Lord says 'where it listeth,' He implies that a change has passed over a man, when that new life is born within him, whereby the law, the known will of God, is written upon his heart, and, inscribed on these fleshly tables, becomes no longer an iron force external to him, but a vital impulse within him. That is freedom, to have my better will absolutely conterminous and coincident with the will of God, so far as I know it. Just as a man is not imprisoned by limits beyond which he has no desire to go, so freedom, and elevation, and nobility come by obeying, not the commands of an external authority, but the impulse of an inward life.

'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage,' because God hath given us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of self-control, which keeps down that base and inferior 'listing,' and elevates the higher and the nobler one, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' because duty has become delight, and there is no desire in the new and higher nature for anything except that which God enjoins. The true freedom is when, by the direction of our will, we change 'must' into 'I delight to do Thy will.' So we are set free from the bondage and burden of a law that is external, and is not loved, and are brought into the liberty of, for dear love's sake, doing the will of the beloved.

'Myself shall to my darling be
Both law and impulse,'

says one of the poets about a far inferior matter. It is true in reference to the Christian life, and the 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,'

But, then, in order freely to understand the sweep and the greatness of this perfect law of liberty, we must remember that the new life is implanted in us precisely in order that we may suppress, and, if need be, cast out and exorcise, that lower 'listing,' of which I have said that it is always ignoble and sometimes animal. For this freedom will bring with it the necessity for continual warfare against all that would limit and restrain it—namely, the passions and desires and inclinations of our baser or nobler, but godless, self. These are, as it were, deposed by the entrance of the new life. But it is a dangerous thing to keep dethroned and discrowned tyrants alive, and the best thing is to behead them, as well as to cast them from their throne. 'If ye, through the Spirit, do put to death the deeds' and inclinations and wills 'of the flesh, ye shall live'; and if you do not, they will live and will kill you. So the freedom of the new life is a militant freedom, and we have to fight to maintain it.

As Burke said about the political realm, 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance,' so we say about the new life of the Christian man—he is free only on condition that he keeps well under hatches the old tyrants, who are ever plotting and struggling to have dominion once again.

Still further, whilst this new life makes us free from the harshness of a law that can only proclaim duty, and also makes us free from our own baser selves, it makes us free from all human authority. The true foundation of the Christian democracy is that each individual soul has direct and immediate access to, and direct and real possession of, God, in his spirit and life. Therefore, in the measure in which we draw into ourselves the new life and the Spirit of God shall we be independent of men round us, and be able to say, 'With me it is a very small matter to be judged of you or of man's judgment.' That new life ought to make men *original*, in the deep and true sense of the word, as drawing their conceptions of duty and their methods of life, not at second hand from other men, but straight from God Himself. If the Christian Church was fuller of that divine life than it is, it would be fuller of all varieties of Christian beauty and excellence, and all these would be the work of 'that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.' If this congregation were indeed filled with the new life, there would be an exuberance of power, and a harmonious diversity of characteristics about it, and a burning up of the conventionalities of Christian profession such as we do not dream of to-day. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.'

II. Here we have this new life in its manifestation.

'Thou hearest the sound,' or, as the Word might literally be rendered, the 'voice thereof,' from the little whisper among the young soft leaves of the opening beeches in our woods to-day, up to the typhoon that spreads devastation over leagues of tropical ocean. That voice, now a murmur, now a roar, is the only manifestation of the unseen force that sweeps around us. And if you are a Christian man or woman your new life should be thus perceptible to others, in a variety of ways, no doubt, and in many degrees of force. You cannot show its roots; you are bound to show its fruits. You cannot lay bare your spirits, and say to the world, 'Look! there is the presence of a divine germ in me,' but you can go about amongst men, and witness to the possession of it by the life that you live. There are a great many Christian people from whom, if you were to listen ever so intently, you would not hear a sough or a ripple. There is a dead calm; the 'rushing mighty wind' has died down; and there is nothing but a greasy swell upon the windless ocean. 'The wind bloweth,' and the 'sound' is heard. The wind ceases, and there is a hideous silence. And that is the condition of many a man and woman that has a name to live and is dead. Does anybody hear the whisper of that breath in your life, Christian man? It is not for me to answer the question; it is for you to ask it and answer it for yourselves.

And Christians should be in the world, as the very breath of life amidst stagnation. When the Christian Church first sprung into being it did come into that corrupt, pestilential march of ancient heathenism with healing on its wings, and like fresh air from the pure hills into some fever-stricken district. Wherever there has been a new outburst, in the experience of individuals and of churches, of that divine life, there has come, and the world has felt that there has come, a new force that breathes over the dry bones, and they live. Alas, alas! that

so frequently the professing Christian Church has ceased to discharge its plain function, to breathe on the slain that they may live.

They are curing, or say they are curing, consumption nowadays, by taking the patient and keeping him in the open air, and letting the wind of heaven blow freely about him. That, and not shutting people in warm chambers, and coddling them with the prescriptions of social and political reformation, that is the cure for the world's diseases. Wherever the new life is vigorous in men, men will hear the sound thereof, and recognise that it comes from heaven.

III. Lastly, here we have the new life in its double secret.

I have been saying that it has a means of manifestation which all Christian people are bound to exemplify. But our Lord draws a broad distinction between that which can be manifested and that which cannot. As I said, you can show the leaves and the fruits; the roots are covered. 'Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.'

The origin of that new life is 'hid with Christ in God.' And so, since we are not dependent upon external things for the communication of the life, we should not be dependent upon them for its continuation and its nourishment, and we should realise that, if we are Christians, we are living in two regions, and, though as regards the surface life we belong to the things of time, as regards the deepest life, we belong to eternity. All the surface springs may run dry. What then? As long as there is a deep-seated fountain that comes welling up, the fields will be green, and we may laugh at famine and drought. If it be true that 'our lives are hid with Christ in God,' then it ought to be true that the nourishments, as well as the direction and impulse of them, are drawn from Him, and that we seek not so much for the abundance of the things that minister to the external as for the fulness of those that sustain the inward, the true life, the life of Christ in the soul.

The world does not know where that Christian life comes from. If you are a Christian, you ought to bear in your character a certain indefinable something that will suggest to the people round you that the secret power of your life is other than the power which moulds theirs. You may be naturalised, and you may speak fairly well the language of the country in which you are a sojourner, but there ought to be something in your accent which tells where you come from, and betrays the foreigner. We ought to move amongst men, having about us that which cannot be explained by what is enough to explain their lives. A Christian life should be the manifestation to the world of the supernatural.

They 'know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.' No; that new life in its feeblest infancy, and before it speaks, if I may so say, is, by its very existence, a prophet, and declares that there must be, beyond this 'bank and shoal of time,' a region to which it is native, and in which it may grow to maturity. You will find in your greenhouses exotics that stand there, after all your pains and coals, stunted, and seeming to sigh for the tropical heat which is their home. The earnest of our inheritance, the first-fruits of the Spirit, the Christian life which originated in, and is sustained by, the flowing of the divine life into us, demands that, somehow or other, the stunted plant should be lifted and removed into that 'higher house where these are planted'—and what shall be the spread of its branches, and

the lustre of its leaves, and what the gorgeousness of its blossoms, and what the perennial sweetness of its fruits then and there, 'it doth not yet appear.'

They 'know not whither it goeth.' And even those who themselves possess it know not, nor shall know, through the ages of a progressive approximation to the ever-approached and never-attained perfection. 'This spake He of the Holy Ghost, which they that believe on Him should receive.' Trust Christ, and 'the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus shall make you free from the law of sin and death.'

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

'Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.'—JOHN iii. 14.

This is the second of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord lays His hand upon an institution or incident of the Old Testament, as shadowing forth some aspect of His work. In the first of these instances, under the image of the ladder that Jacob saw, our Lord presented Himself as the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth; here He goes a step further into the heart of His work, and under the image, very eloquent to the Pharisee to whom He was speaking, of the brazen serpent lifted up on the pole in the desert, proclaims Himself as the medium of healing and of life to a poisoned world.

Now, Nicodemus has a great many followers to-day. He took up a position which many take up. He recognised Christ as a Teacher, and was willing to accord to the almost unknown young man from Galilee the coveted title of 'Rabbi.' He came to Him with a little touch of condescension, and evidently thought that for him, a ruler of the Jews, a member of the upper and educated classes, to be willing to speak of Jesus as a Teacher, was an endorsement that the young aspirant might be gratified to receive. 'Rabbi, *we* know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God'—but he stopped there. He is not the only one who compliments Jesus Christ, while he degrades Him from His unique position. Now, to this inadequate conception of our Lord's Person and work, Christ opposed the solemn insistence on the incapacity of human nature as it is, to enter into communion with, and submission to, God. And then He passes on to speak—in precise parallelism with the position that He took up when He likened Himself to the Ladder of Jacob's vision—of Himself as being the Son of Man that came down from Heaven, and therefore is able to reveal heavenly things. In my text He further unveils in symbol the mystery and dignity of His Person and of His work, whilst He speaks of a mysterious lifting up of this Son of Man who came down from heaven. These are the truths that the conception of Christ as a great Teacher needs for its completion; the contrariety of human nature with the divine will, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Crucifixion of the Incarnate Son. And so we have here three points, to which I desire to turn, as setting forth the conception of His own work which Jesus Christ presented as completing the conception of it, to which Nicodemus had attained.

I. There is, first, the lifting up of the Son of Man.

Now, of course, the sole purpose of setting that brazen serpent on the pole was to render it conspicuous, and all that Nicodemus could *then* understand by the symbol was that, in some unknown way, this heaven-descended Son of Man should be set forth before Israel and the world as being the Healer of all their diseases. But we are wiser, after the event, than the ruler of the Jews could be at the threshold of Christ's ministry. We have also to remember that this is not the only occasion, though it is the first, on which our Lord used this very significant expression. For twice over in this Gospel we find it upon His lips—once when, addressing the unbelieving multitude, He says 'When ye have lifted up the Son of

Man, then shall ye know that I am He'; and once when in soliloquy, close on Calvary, He says, as the vision of a world flocking to Him rises before Him on occasion of the wish of a few Greek proselytes to see Him, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' We do not need, though we have, the Evangelist's commentary, 'this He spake signifying what death He should die.'

So, if we accept the historical veracity of this Gospel, we here perceive Jesus Christ, at the very beginning of His career, and before the dispositions of the nation towards Him had developed themselves in action, discerning its end, and seeing, gaunt and grim before Him, the Cross that was lifted up on Calvary. Enthusiasts and philanthropists and apostles of all sorts, in the regions of science and beneficence and morals and religion, begin their career with trusting that their 'brethren should have understood' that God was speaking through them. But no illusion of that sort, according to these Evangelists, drew Jesus Christ out of His seclusion at Nazareth and impelled Him on His career. From the beginning He knew that the Cross was to be the end. That Cross was not to Him a necessity, accepted as the price of faithfulness in doing His work, so that His attitude was, 'I will speak what is in Me, though I die for it,' but it was to Him the very heart of the work which He came to do. Therefore, after He had said to the ruler of the Jews that the Son of Man, as descended from Heaven, was able to *speak* of heavenly things, He added the deeper necessity, He 'must be lifted up.' Where lay the 'must'? In the requirement of the work which He had set Himself to do. Beneath this great saying there lies a pathetic, stern, true conception of the condition of human nature. That desert encampment, with the poisoned men dying on every hand, is the emblem under which Jesus Christ, the gentlest and the sweetest soul that ever lived, looked out upon humanity. And it was because the facts of human nature called for something far more than a teacher that He said 'the Son of Man must be lifted up.' For what they needed, and what He had set Himself to bring, could only be brought by One who yielded Himself up for the sins of the whole world.

But that 'must,' which thus arose from the requirements of the task that He had set before Him, had its source in His own heart; it was no necessity imposed upon Him from without. True, it was a necessity laid on Him by filial obedience, but also true, it was the necessity accepted by Him in pursuance of the impulse of His own heart. He must die because He must save, and He must save because He loved. So He was not nailed to the Cross by the nails and hammers of the Roman soldiers, and the taunt that was flung at Him as He hung there had a deeper meaning, as scoffs thrown at Him and His cause ordinarily have, than the scoffers understood: 'He saved others,' and therefore 'Himself He cannot save.'

So here we have Christ accepting, as well as discerning, the Cross. And we have more than that. We have Christ looking at the Cross as being, not humiliation, but exaltation. 'The Son of Man must be lifted up.' And what does that mean? It means the same thing that He said when, near the end, He declared, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.' We are accustomed to speak—and we speak rightly—of His death as being the lowest point of the humiliation which was inherent in the very fact of His humanity. He condescended to be born; He stooped yet more to die. But whilst that is true, the other side is also true—that in the Cross Christ is lifted up, and that it is His Throne. For what see we

there? The highest exhibition, the tenderest revelation, of His perfect love. And what see we there besides? The supreme manifestation of the highest power.

''Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Tis greater to redeem.'

To save humanity, to make it possible that men should receive that second birth, and should enter into the Kingdom of God—that was a greater work, because a work not only of creation, but of restoration, than it was to send forth the stars on their courses and to 'preserve' the ancient heavens 'from wrong.' There is a revelation of divine might when we 'lift up our eyes on high,' and see how, 'because He is great in power, not one faileth.' But there is a mightier revelation of divine power when we see how, from amidst the ruins of humanity, He can restore the divine image, and piece together, as it were, without sign of flaw or crack or one fragment wanting, the fair image that was shattered into fragments by the blow of Sin's heavy mace. Power in its highest operation, power in its tenderest efficacy, power in its widest sweep, are set forth on the Cross of Christ, and that weak Man hanging there, dying in the dark, is 'the power of God' as well as 'the wisdom of God.' The Cross is Christ's Throne, but it is His sovereign manifestation of love and power only if it is what, as I believe He told us it was, and what His servants from His lips caught the interpretation of it as being, the death for the sins of the sin-stricken world. Unless we can believe that, when He died, He died for us, I know not why Christ's death should appeal to our love. But if we recognise—as I pray that we all may recognise—that our deep need for something far more than Teacher or Pattern has been met in that great 'one Sacrifice for sins for ever,' then the magnetism of the Cross begins to tell, and we understand what He meant when He said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Brethren, the Cross is His Throne, from which He rules the world, and if you strike His sacrifice for sins out of your conception of His work, you have robbed Him of sovereignty, and taken out of His hand the sceptre by which He governs the hearts and wills of rebellious and restored men.

II. Notice, again, how we have here the look at the uplifted Son of Man.

I do not need to paint for you what your own imaginations can sufficiently paint for yourselves—the scene in the wilderness where the dying men from the very outskirts of the camp could turn a filmy eye to the brazen serpent hanging in their midst. That look is the symbol of what we need, in order that the life-giving power of Christ should enter into our death. There is no better description of the act of Christian faith than that picture of the dying Israelite turning his languid eye to the symbol of healing and life. That trust which Jesus emphasises here in 'whosoever *believeth* on Him,' He opposes very emphatically to Nicodemus's confession, 'We know that Thou art a Teacher.' We know—you have to go a step further, Nicodemus! 'We know'; well and good, but are you included in 'whosoever believeth'? Faith is an advance on credence. There is an intellectual side to it, but its essence is what is the essence of trust always, the act of the will throwing itself on that which is discerned to be trustworthy. You know that a given man is reliable—that is not relying on him. You have to go a step further. And so, dear brethren, you may believe thirty-nine or thirty-nine thousand Articles with an unfaltering credence, and you may be as far away from faith as if you did not believe one of them. There may be a perfect belief and an absolute want of faith. And on the other hand, blessed be God! there may be a real and an operative trust with a very imperfect or mistaken creed. The wild flowers on the rock

bloom fair and bright, though they have scarcely any soil in which to strike their roots, and the plants in the most fertile garden may fail to produce flowers and seed. So trust and credence are not always of the same magnitude.

This trust is no arbitrary condition. The Israelite was bid to turn to the brazen serpent. There was no connection between his look and his healing, except in so far as the symbol was a help to, and looking at it was a test of, his faith in the healing power of God. But it is no arbitrary appointment, as many people often think it is, which connects inseparably together the look of faith and the eternal life that Christ gives. For seeing that salvation is no mere external gift of shutting up some outward Hell and opening the door to some outward Heaven, but is a state of heart and mind, of relation to God, the only way by which that salvation can come into a man's heart is that he, knowing his need of it, shall trust Christ, and through Him the new life will flow into his heart. Faith is trust, and trust is the stretching out of the hand to take the precious gift, the opening of the heart for the influx of the grace, the eating of the bread, the drinking of the water, of life.

It is the only possible condition. God forbid that I should even seem to depreciate other forms of healing men's evils and redressing men's wrongs, and diminishing the sorrows of humanity! We welcome them all; but education, art, culture, refinement, improved environment, bettered social and political conditions, whilst they do a great deal, do not go down to the bottom of the necessity. And after you have built your colleges and art museums and stately pleasure-houses, and set every man in an environment that is suited to develop him, you will find out what surely the world might have found out already, that, as in some stately palace built in the Campagna, the malaria is in the air, and steals in at the windows, and infects all the inhabitants. Thank God for all these other things! but you cannot heal a man who has poison in his veins by administering cosmetics, and you cannot put out Vesuvius with a jugful of water. If the camp is to be healed, the Christ must be lifted up.

III. And now, lastly, here we have the life that comes with a look at the lifted-up Son of Man.

Those of you who are using the Revised Version will see that there is a little change made here, partly by the exclusion of a clause and partly by changing the order of the words. The alteration is not only nearer the original text, but brings out a striking thought. It reads that 'whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life.' Now, it is far too late a period of my discourse to enlarge upon all that these great words would suggest to us, but let me just, in a sentence or two, mark the salient points.

'Eternal life'; do not bring that down to the narrow and inadequate conception of unending existence. It involves that, but it means a great deal more. It means a life of such a sort as is worth calling life, which is a life in union with God, and therefore full of blessedness, full of purity, full of satisfaction, full of desire and aspiration, and all these with the stamp of unendingness deeply impressed upon them. And that is what comes to us through the look. Not only is the process of dying arrested, but there is substituted for it a new process of growing possession of a new life. You 'must be born again,' Christ had been saying to Nicodemus. The change that passes upon a man when once he has anchored his trust on Jesus Christ, the uplifted Son of Man, is so profound that it is nothing else than a

new birth, and a new life comes into his veins untainted by the poison, and with no proclivity to death.

'May have eternal life'—now, here, on the instant. That eternal life is no future gift to be bestowed upon mortal men when they have passed through the agony of death, but it is a gift which comes to us here, and may come to any man on the instant of his looking to Jesus Christ.

'May in Him have eternal life'—union with Christ by faith, that profound incorporation—if I may use the word—into Him, which the New Testament sets forth in all sorts of aspects as the very foundation of the blessings of Christianity; that union is the condition of eternal life. So, dear brethren, we all need that the poison shall be cast out of our veins. We all need that the tendency downwards to a condition which can only be described as death may be arrested, and the motion reversed. We all need that our knowledge shall be vitalised into faith. We all need that the past shall be forgiven, and the power of sin upon us in the present shall be cancelled. 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,' because it was shed for the remission of the sins of the many, and is transfused, an untainted principle of life, into our veins. What Jesus said to Nicodemus by night in that quiet chamber in Jerusalem, what He said in effect and act upon the Cross, when uplifted there, is what He says to each of us from the Throne where He is now lifted up: 'Whosoever believeth shall in Me have eternal life.' Take Him at His word, and you will find that it is true.

CHRIST'S MUSTS

'... Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.'—JOHN iii. 14.

I have chosen this text for the sake of one word in it, that solemn 'must' which was so often on our Lord's lips. I have no purpose of dealing with the remainder of this clause, nor indeed with it at all, except as one instance of His use of the expression. But I have felt it might be interesting, and might set old truths in a brighter light, if we gather together the instances in which Christ speaks of the great necessity which dominated His life, and shaped even small acts.

The expression is most frequently used in reference to the Passion and Resurrection. There are many instances in the Gospels, in which He speaks of that *must*. The first of these is that of my text. Then there is another class, of which His word to His mother when a twelve-year-old child may be taken as a type: 'Wist ye not that I *must* be about My Father's business?' where the mysterious consciousness of a special relation to God in the child's heart drew Him to the Temple and to His Father's work. Other similar instances are those in which He responded to the multitude when they wanted to keep Him to themselves: 'I *must* preach in other cities also'; or as when He said, 'I *must* work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day.'

Yet another aspect of the same necessity is presented when, looking far beyond the earthly work and suffering, He discerned the future triumph which was to be the issue of these, and said, 'Other sheep I have... them also I *must* bring.'

And yet another is in reference to a very small matter: His selection of a place for a few hours' rest on His last fateful journey to Jerusalem, when He said, 'Zaccheus,... to-day I *must* abide at thy house.'

Now, if we put these instances together, we shall get some precious glimpses into our Lord's heart, and His view of life.

I. Here we see Christ recognising and accepting the necessity for His death.

My text, if we accept John's Gospel, contributes an altogether new element to our conception of our Lord as announcing His death. For the other three Gospels lay emphasis on it as being part of His teaching, especially during the later stage of His ministry. But it does not follow that He began to think about it or to see it, when He began to speak about it. There are reasons for the earlier comparative reticence, and there is no ground for the conclusion that then first began to dawn upon a disappointed enthusiast the grim reality that His work was not going to prosper, and that martyrdom was necessary. That is a notion that has been frequently upheld of late years, but to me it seems altogether incongruous with the facts of the case. And, if John's Gospel is a true record, that theory is shivered against this text, which represents Him at the very beginning of His career—the time when, according to that other theory, He was full of the usual buoyant and baseless anticipations of a reformer commencing His course—as telling Nicodemus, 'Even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.' In like manner, in the previous chapter of this same Gospel, we

have the significant though enigmatical utterance: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up'; with the Evangelist's authoritative comment: 'He spake of the Temple of His body.' So, from the beginning of His career, the end was clear before Him.

And why *must* He go to the Cross? Not merely, as the other Evangelists put it, in order that 'it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the prophets.' It was not that Jesus must die because the prophets had said that Messiah should, but that the prophets had said that Messiah should because Jesus must. There was a far deeper necessity than the fulfilment of any prophetic utterance, even the necessity which shaped that utterance. The work of Jesus Christ could not be done unless He died. He could not be the Saviour of the world unless He was the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

We cannot see all the grounds of that solemn imperative, but this we can see, that it was because of the requirements of the divine righteousness, and because of the necessities of sinful men. And so Christ's was no martyr's death, who had to die as the penalty of the faithful discharge of His duty. It was not the penalty that He paid for doing His work, but it was the work itself. Not that gracious life, nor 'the loveliness of perfect deeds,' nor His words of sweet wisdom, nor His acts of transcendent power, equalled only by the pity that moved the power, completed His task, but He 'came to give His life a ransom for many.'

'Must' is a hard word. It may express an unwelcome necessity. Was this necessity unwelcome? When He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' was He shrinking, or reluctantly submitting? Ah, no! He *must* die because He *would* save, and He *would* save because He *did* love. His filial obedience to God coincided with His pity for men: and not merely in obedience to the requirements of the divine righteousness, but in compassion for the necessities of sinners, necessity was laid upon Him.

Oh, brethren! nothing held Christ to the Cross but His own desire to save us. Neither priests nor Romans carried Him thither. What fastened Him to it was not the nails driven by rude hands. And the reason why He did not, as the taunters bade Him do, come down from it, was neither a physical nor a moral necessity unwelcome to Himself, but the yielding of His own will to do all which was needed for man's salvation.

This sacrifice was bound to the altar by the cords of love. We have heard of martyrs who have refused to be tied to the stake, and have kept themselves motionless in the centre of the fierce flames by the force of their wills. Jesus Christ fastened Himself to the Cross and died because He would.

And, oh! if we think of that sweet, serene life as having clear before it from the very first steps that grim end, how infinitely it gains in pathetic beauty and in heart-touchingness! What wonderful self-abnegation! How he was at leisure from Himself, with a heart of pity for every sorrow, and loins girt for all service, though during all His life the Cross closed the vista! Think that human shrinking was felt by Him, think that it was so held back that His purpose never faltered, think that each of us may say, 'He *must* die because He *would* save me'; and then ask, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?'

II. In a second class of these utterances, we see Christ impelled by filial obedience and the consciousness of His mission.

'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' That was a strange utterance for a boy of twelve. It seems to negative the supposition that what is called the 'Messianic

consciousness' dawned upon Jesus Christ first after His baptism and the descent of the Spirit. But however that may be, it and the similar passages to which I have already referred, bearing upon His discharge of His work prior to His death, teach that the necessity was an inward necessity springing from His consciousness of Sonship, and His recognition of the work that He had to do. And so He is our great Example of spontaneous obedience, which does violence to itself if it does not obey. It was instinct that sent the boy into the Temple. Where should a Son be but in His Father's house? How could He not be doing His Father's business?

Thus He stands before us, the pattern for the only obedience that is worth calling so, the obedience which would be pained and ill at ease unless it were doing the work of God. Religion is meant to make it a second nature, or, as I have ventured to call it, an instinct—a spontaneous, uncalculating, irrepressible desire—to be in fellowship with God, and to be doing His will. That is the meaning of our Christianity. There is no obedience in reluctant obedience; forced service is slavery, not service. Christianity is given for the specific purpose that it may bring us so into touch with Jesus Christ as that the mind which was in Him may be in us; and that we too may be able to say, with a kind of wonder that people should have expected to find us in any other place, or doing anything else, 'Wist ye not that because I am a Son, *I* must be about my Father's business?' As certainly as the sunflower follows the sun, so certainly will a man animated by the mind that was in Jesus Christ, like Him find his very life's breath in doing the Father's will.

So then, brethren, what about our grudging service? What about our reluctant obedience? What about the widespread mistake that religion prohibits wished-for things and enforces unwelcome duties? If my Christianity does not make me recoil from what it forbids, and spring eagerly to what it commends, my Christianity is of very little use. If when in the Temple we are like idle boys in school, always casting glances at the clock and the door, and wishing ourselves outside, we may just as well be out as in. Glad obedience is true obedience. Only he who can say, 'Thy law is within my heart, and I do Thy will because I love Thee, and cannot but do as Thou desirest,' has found the joy possible to a Christian life. It is not 'harsh and crabbed,' as those that look upon it from the outside may 'suppose,' but musical and full of sweetness. There is nothing more blessed than when 'I choose' covers exactly the same ground as 'I ought.' And when duty is delight, delight will never become disgust, nor joy pass away.

III. We see, in yet another use of this great 'must,' Christ anticipating His future triumph.

'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.' Striking as these words are in themselves, they are still more striking when we notice their connection; for they follow immediately upon His utterance about laying down His life for the sheep. So, then, this was a work beyond the Cross, and whatever it was, it was to be done after He had died.

I need not point out to you how far afield Christ's vision goes out into the dim, waste places, where on the dark mountains the straying sheep are torn and frightened and starving. I need not dwell upon how far ahead in the future His glance travels, or how magnificent and how rebuking to our petty narrowness this great word is. 'There shall be one *flock*' (not fold); and they shall be one, not because they are within the bounds of any

visible 'fold,' but because they are gathered round the one Shepherd, and in their common relation to Him are knit together in unity.

But what sort of a Man is this who considers that His widest work is to be done by Him after He is dead? 'Them also I *must* bring.' Thou? how? when? Surely such words as these, side by side with a clear prevision of the death that was so soon to come, are either meaningless or the utterance of an arrogance bordering on insanity, or they anticipate what an Evangelist declares did take place—that the Lord was 'taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God,' whilst His servants 'went everywhere preaching the Word, the Lord also working with them and confirming the Word' with the signs He wrought.

'Them also I must bring.' That is not merely a necessity rooted in the nature of God and the wants of men. It is not merely a necessity springing from Christ's filial obedience and sense of a mission; but it is a 'must' of destiny, a 'must' which recognises the sure results of His passion; a 'must' which implies the power of the Cross to be the reconciliation of the world. And so for all pessimistic thoughts to-day, or at any time, and when Christian men's hearts may be trembling for the Ark of God—although, perhaps, there may be little reason for the tremor—and in the face of all blatant antagonisms and of proud Goliaths despising the 'foolishness of preaching,' we fall back upon Christ's great 'must.' It is written in the councils of Heaven more unchangeably than the heavens; it is guaranteed by the power of the Cross; it is certain, by the eternal life of the crucified Saviour, that He will one day be the King of humanity, and *must* bring His wandering sheep to couch in peace, one flock round one Shepherd.

IV. Lastly, we have Christ applying the greatest principle to the smallest duty.

'Zaccheus! make haste and come down; to-day I *must* abide in thy house.' Why must He? Because Zaccheus was to be saved, and was worth saving. What was the 'must'? To stop for an hour or two on His road to the Cross. So He teaches us that in a life penetrated by the thought of the divine will, which we gladly obey, there are no things too great, and none too trivial, to be brought under the dominion of that law, and to be regulated by that divine necessity. Obedience is obedience, whether in large things or in small. There is no scale of magnitude applicable to the distinction between God's will and that which is not God's will. Gravitation rules the motes that dance in the sunshine as well as the mass of Jupiter. A triangle with its apex in the sun, and its base beyond the solar system, has the same properties and comes under the same laws as one that a schoolboy scrawls upon his slate. God's truth is not too great to rule the smallest duties. The star in the East was a guide to the humble house at Bethlehem, and there are starry truths high in the heavens that avail for our guidance in the smallest acts of life.

So, brethren, bring your doings under that all-embracing law of duty—duty, which is the heathen expression for the will of God. There are great regions of life in which lower necessities have play. Circumstances, our past, bias and temper, relationship, friendship, civic duty, and the like—all these bring their necessities; but let us think of them all as being, what indeed they are, manifestations to us of the will of our Father. There are great tracts of life in which either of two courses may be right, and we are left to the decision of choice rather than of duty; but high above all these, let us see towering that divine necessity. It is a daily struggle to bring 'I will' to coincide with 'I ought'; and there is only

one adequate and always powerful way of securing that coincidence, and that is to keep close to Jesus Christ and to drink in His spirit. Then, when duty and delight are conterminous, 'the rough places will be plain, and the crooked things straight, and every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley shall be exalted,' and life will be blessed, and service will be freedom. Joy and liberty and power and peace will fill our hearts when this is the law of our being; 'All that the Lord hath spoken, that *must* I do.'

THE LAKE AND THE RIVER

'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'—JOHN iii. 16.

I venture to say that my text shows us a lake, a river, a pitcher, and a draught. 'God so loved the world'—that is the lake. A lake makes a river for itself—'God so loved the world that He *gave* His… Son.' But the river does not quench any one's thirst unless he has something to lift the water with: 'God so loved the world that He gave His… Son, that whosoever *believeth* on Him.' Last comes the draught: 'shall not perish, but have *everlasting life.*'

I. The great lake, God's love.

Before Jesus Christ came into this world no one ever dreamt of saying 'God *loves*.' Some of the Old Testament psalmists had glimpses of that truth and came pretty near expressing it. But among all the 'gods many and lords many,' there were lustful gods and beautiful gods, and idle gods, and fighting gods and peaceful gods: but not one of whom worshippers said, 'He loves.' Once it was a new and almost incredible message, but we have grown accustomed to it, and it is not strange any more to us. But if we would try to think of what it means, the whole truth would flash up into fresh newness, and all the miseries and sorrows and perplexities of our lives would drift away down the wind, and we should be no more troubled with them. 'God loves' is the greatest thing that can be said by lips.

'God … loved the world.' Now when we speak of loving a number of individuals—the broader the stream, the shallower it is, is it not? The most intense patriot in England does not love her one ten-thousandth part as well as he loves his own little girl. When we think or feel anything about a great multitude of people, it is like looking at a forest. We do not see the trees, we see the whole wood. But that is not how God loves the world. Suppose I said that I loved the people in India, I should not mean by that that I had any feeling about any individual soul of all those dusky millions, but only that I massed them all together; or made what people call a generalisation of them. But that is not the way in which God loves. He loves all because He loves each. And when we say, 'God so loved the world,' we have to break up the mass into its atoms, and to think of each atom as being an object of His love. We all stand out in God's love just as we should do to one another's eyes, if we were on the top of a mountain-ridge with a clear sunset sky behind us. Each little black dot of the long procession would be separately visible. And we all stand out like that, every man of us isolated, and getting as much of the love of God as if there was not another creature in the whole universe but God and ourselves. Have you ever realised that when we say, 'He loved the world,' that really means, as far as each of us is concerned, He loves *me*? And just as the whole beams of the sun come pouring down into every eye of the crowd that is looking up to it, so the whole love of God pours down, not upon a multitude, an abstraction, a community, but upon every single soul that makes up that community. He loves us all because He loves us each. We shall never get all the good of that thought until we translate

it, and lay it upon our hearts. It is all very well to say, 'Ah yes! God is love,' and it is all very well to say He loves 'the world.' But I will tell you what is a great deal better—to say—what Paul said—'Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.'

Now, there is one other suggestion that I would make to you before I go on, and that is that all through the New Testament, but especially in John's Gospel, 'the world' does not only mean men, but *sinful* men, men separated from God. And the great and blessed truth taught here is that, however I may drag myself away from God, I cannot drive Him away from me, and that however little I may care for Him, or love Him, or think about Him, it does not make one hairs-breadth of difference as to the fact that He loves me. I know, of course, that if a man does not love Him back again, God's love has to take shapes that it would not otherwise take, which may be extremely inconvenient for the man. But though the shape may alter, *must* alter, the fact remains; and every sinful soul on the earth, including Judas Iscariot—who is said to head the list of crimes—has God's love resting upon him.

II. The river.

Now, to go back to my metaphor, the lake makes a river. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.'

So then, it was not Christ's death that turned God from hating and being angry, but it was God's love that appointed Christ's death. If you will only remember that, a great many of the shallow and popular objections to the great doctrine of the Atonement disappear at once. 'God so loved ... that He gave.' But some people say that when we preach that Jesus Christ died for our sins, that God's wrath might not fall upon men, our teaching is immoral, because it means 'Christ came, and so God loved.' It is the other way about, friend. 'God so loved ... that He gave.'

But now let me carry you back to the Old Testament. Do you remember the story of the father taking his boy who carried the bundle of wood and the fire, and tramping over the mountains till they reached the place where the sacrifice was to be offered? Do you remember the boy's question that brings tears quickly to the reader's eyes: 'Here is the wood, and here is the fire, where is the lamb'? Do you not think it would be hard for the father to steady his voice and say, 'My son, God will provide the lamb'? And do you remember the end of that story? 'The Angel of the Lord said unto Abraham, Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not *withheld* thy son, *thine only son*, from Me, therefore blessing I will bless thee,' etc. Remember that one of the Apostles said, using the very same word that is used in Genesis as to Abraham's giving up his son to God, 'He *spared not* His own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all.' Does not that point to a mysterious parallel? Somehow or other—we have no right to attempt to say how—somehow or other, God not only *sent* His Son, as it is said in the next verse to my text, but far more tenderly, wonderfully, pathetically, God *gave*—gave up His Son, and the sacrifice was enhanced, because it was His only begotten Son.

Ah! dear brethren, do not let us be afraid of following out all that is included in that great word, 'God ... *loved* the world.' For there is no love which does not delight in giving, and there is no love that does not delight in depriving itself, in some fashion, of what it gives. And I, for my part, believe that Paul's words are to be taken in all their blessed depth and

wonderfulness of meaning when he says, 'He gave up'—as well as gave—'Him to the death for us all.'

And now, do you not think that we are able in some measure to estimate the greatness of that little word 'so'? 'God *so* loved'—*so* deeply, so holily, *so* perfectly—that He 'gave His only begotten Son'; and the gift of that Son is, as it were, the river by which the love of God comes to every soul in the world.

Now there are a great many people who would like to put the middle part of this great text of ours into a parenthesis. They say that we should bring the first words and the last words of this text together, and never mind all that lies between. People who do not like the doctrine of the Cross would say, 'God so loved the world that He gave… everlasting life'; and there an end. 'If there is a God, and if He loves the world, why cannot He save the world without more ado? There is no need for these interposed clauses. God so loved the world that everybody will go to heaven'—that is the gospel of a great many of you; and it is the gospel of a great many wise and learned people. But it is not John's Gospel, and it is not Christ's Gospel. The beginning and the end of the text cannot be buckled up together in that rough-and-ready fashion. They have to be linked by a chain; and there are two links in the chain: God forges the one, and we have to forge the other. 'God so loved the world that He gave'—then He has done His work. 'That whosoever believeth'—that is your work. And it is in vain that God forges *His* link, unless you will forge *yours* and link it up to His. 'God so loved the world,' that is step number one in the process; 'that He gave,' that is step number two; and then there comes another 'that'—'that whosoever believeth,' that is step number three; and they are all needed before you come to number four, which is the landing-place and not a step—'should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

III. The pitcher.

I come to what I called the pitcher, with which we draw the water for our own use—'that whosoever believeth.' You perhaps say, 'Yes, I believe. I accept every word of the Gospel, I quite believe that Jesus Christ died, as a matter of history; and I quite believe that He died for men's sins.' And what then? Is that what Jesus Christ meant by believing? To believe *about* Him is not to believe *on* Him; and unless you believe on Him you will get no good out of Him. There is the lake, and the river must flow past the shanties in the clearing in the forest, if the men there are to drink. But it may flow past their doors, as broad as the Mississippi, and as deep as the ocean; but they will perish with thirst, unless they dip in their hands, like Gideon's men, and carry the water to their own lips. Dear friend, what you have to do—and your soul's salvation, and your peace and joy and nobleness in this life and in the next depend absolutely upon it—is simply to trust in Jesus Christ and His death for your sins.

I sometimes wish we had never heard that word 'faith.' For as soon as we begin to talk about 'faith,' people begin to think that we are away up in some theological region far above everyday life. Suppose we try to bring it down a little nearer to our businesses and bosoms, and instead of using a word that is kept sacred for employment in religious matters, and saying 'faith,' we say 'trust.' That is what you give to your wives and husbands, is it not? And that is exactly what you have to give to Jesus Christ, simply to lay hold of Him as a man lays hold of the heart that loves him, and leans his whole weight upon it. Lean

hard on Him, hang on Him, or, to take the other metaphor that is one of the Old Testament words for trust, 'flee for refuge' to Him. Fancy a man with the avenger of blood at his back, and the point of the pursuer's spear almost pricking his spine—don't you think he would make for the City of Refuge with some speed? That is what you have to do. He that believeth, and by trust lays hold of the Hand that holds him up, will never fall; and he that does not lay hold of that Hand will never stand, to say nothing of rising. And so by these two links God's love of the world is connected with the salvation of the world.

IV. The draught.

Finally, we have here the draught of living water. Did you ever think why our text puts 'should not perish' first? Is it not because, unless we put our trust in Him, we shall certainly perish, and because, therefore, that certainty of perishing must be averted before we can have 'everlasting life'?

Now I am not going to enlarge on these two solemn expressions, 'perishing' and 'everlasting life.' I only say this: men do not need to wait until they die before they 'perish.' There are men and women here now who are dead—dead while they live, and when they come to die, the perishing, which is condemnation and ruin, will only be the making visible, in another condition of life, of what is the fact to-day. Dear brethren, you do not need to die in order to perish in your sins, and, blessed be God, you can have everlasting life before you die. You can have it now, and there is only one way to have it, and that is to lay hold of Him who is the Life. And when you have Jesus Christ in your heart, whom you will be sure to have if you trust Him, then you will have life—life eternal, here and now, and death will only make manifest the eternal life which you had while you were alive here, and will perfect it in fashions that we do not yet know anything about.

Only remember, as I have been trying to show you, the order that runs through this text. Remember the order of these last words, and that we must first of all be delivered from eternal and utter death, before we can be invested with the eternal and absolute life.

Now, dear brethren, I dare say I have never spoken to the great majority of you before; it is quite possible I may never speak to any of you again. I have asked God to help me to speak so as that souls should be drawn to the Saviour. And I beseech you now, as my last word, that you would listen, not to me, but to Him. For it is He that says to us, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, that whosoever'—'whosoever,' a blank cheque, like the M. or N. of the Prayer-book, or the A. B. of a schedule; you can put your own name in it—'that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have'—here, now—'everlasting life.'

THE WEARIED CHRIST

'Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well…. He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.'—JOHN iv. 6,32.

Two pictures result from these two verses, each striking in itself, and gaining additional emphasis by the contrast. It was during a long hot day's march that the tired band of pedestrians turned into the fertile valley. There, whilst the disciples went into the little hill-village to purchase, if they could, some food from the despised inhabitants, Jesus, apparently too exhausted to accompany them, 'sat *thus* on the well.' That little word *thus* seems to have a force difficult to reproduce in English. It is apparently intended to enhance the idea of utter weariness, either because the word 'wearied' is in thought to be supplied, 'sat, being thus wearied, on the well'; or because it conveys the notion which might be expressed by our 'just as He was'; as a tired man flings Himself down anywhere and anyhow, without any kind of preparation beforehand, and not much caring where it is that he rests.

Thus, utterly worn out, Jesus Christ sits on the well, whilst the western sun lengthens out the shadows on the plain. The disciples come back, and what a change they find. Hunger gone, exhaustion ended, fresh vigour in their wearied Master. What had made the difference? The woman's repentance and joy. And He unveils the secret of His reinvigoration when He says, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of'—the hidden manna. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, I think if we take just three points of view, we shall gain the lessons of this remarkable contrast. Note, then, the wearied Christ; the devoted Christ; the reinvigorated Christ.

I. The wearied Christ.

How precious it is to us that this Gospel, which has the loftiest things to say about the manifest divinity of our Lord, and the glory that dwelt in Him, is always careful to emphasise also the manifest limitations and weaknesses of the Manhood. John never forgets either term of his great sentence in which all the gospel is condensed, 'the Word became flesh.' Ever he shows us 'the Word'; ever 'the flesh.' Thus it is he only who records the saying on the Cross, 'I thirst.' It is he who tells us how Jesus Christ, not merely for the sake of getting a convenient opening of a conversation, or to conciliate prejudices, but because He needed what He asked, said to the woman of Samaria, 'Give Me to drink.' So the weariness of the Master stands forth for us as pathetic proof that it was no shadowy investiture with an apparent Manhood to which He stooped, but a real participation in our limitations and weaknesses, so that work to Him was fatigue, even though in Him dwelt the manifest glory of that divine nature which 'fainteth not, neither is weary.'

Not only does this pathetic incident teach us for our firmer faith, and more sympathetic and closer apprehension, the reality of the Manhood of Jesus Christ, but it supplies likewise some imperfect measure of His love, and reveals to us one condition of His power. Ah! if He

had not Himself known weariness He never could have said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It was because Himself 'took our infirmities,' and amongst these the weakness of tired muscles and exhausted frame, that 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' The Creator must have no share in the infirmities of the creature. It must be His unwearied power that calls them all by their names; and because He is great in might 'not one' of the creatures of His hand can 'fail.' But the Redeemer must participate in that from which He redeems; and the condition of His strength being 'made perfect in our weakness' is that our weakness shall have cast a shadow upon the glory of His strength. The measure of His love is seen in that, long before Calvary, He entered into the humiliation and sufferings and sorrows of humanity; a condition of His power is seen in that, forasmuch as the 'children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same,' not only that 'through death He might deliver' from death, but that in life He might redeem from the ills and sorrows of life.

Nor does that exhausted Figure, reclining on Jacob's Well, preach to us only what *He* was. It proclaims to us likewise what *we* should be. For if His work was carried on to the edge of His capacity, and if He shrank not from service because it involved toil, what about the professing followers of Jesus Christ, who think that they are exempted from any form of service because they can plead that it will weary them? What about those who say that they tread in His footsteps, and have never known what it was to yield up one comfort, one moment of leisure, one thrill of enjoyment, or to encounter one sacrifice, one act of self-denial, one aching of weariness for the sake of the Lord who bore all for them? The wearied Christ proclaims His manhood, proclaims His divinity and His love, and rebukes us who consent to 'walk in the way of His commandments' only on condition that it can be done without dust or heat; and who are ready to run the race that is set before us, only if we can come to the goal without perspiration or turning a hair. 'Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.'

II. Still further, notice here the devoted Christ.

It is not often that He lets us have a glimpse into the innermost chambers of His heart, in so far as the impelling motives of His course are concerned. But here He lays them bare. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, it is no mere piece of grammatical pedantry when I ask you to notice that the language of the original is so constructed as to give prominence to the idea that the aim of Christ's life was the doing of the Father's will; and that it is the aim rather than the actual performance and realisation of the aim which is pointed at by our Lord. The words would be literally rendered 'My meat is *that I may do* the will of Him that sent Me and finish His work'—that is to say, the very nourishment and refreshment of Christ was found in making the accomplishment of the Father's commandment His ever-impelling motive, His ever-pursued goal. The expression carries us into the inmost heart of Jesus, dealing, as it does, with the one all-pervading motive rather than with the resulting actions, fair and holy as these were.

Brethren, the secret of our lives, if they are at all to be worthy and noble, must be the same—the recognition, not only as they say now, that we have a mission, but that there *is* a

Sender; which is a wholly different view of our position, and that He who sends is the loving Father, who has spoken to us in that dear Son, who Himself made it His aim thus to obey, in order that it might be possible for us to re-echo His voice, and to repeat His aim. The recognition of the Sender, the absolute submission of our wills to His, must run through all the life. You may do your daily work, whatever it be, with this for its motto, 'the will of the Lord be done'; and they who thus can look at their trade, or profession, and see the trivialities and monotonies of their daily occupations, in the transfiguring light of that great thought, will never need to complain that life is small, ignoble, wearisome, insignificant. As with pebbles in some clear brook with the sunshine on it, the water in which they are sunk glorifies and magnifies them. If you lift them out, they are but bits of dull stone; lying beneath the sunlit ripples they are jewels. Plunge the prose of your life, and all its trivialities, into that great stream, and it will magnify and glorify the smallest and the homeliest. Absolute submission to the divine will, and the ever-present thrilling consciousness of doing it, were the secret of Christ's life, and ought to be the secret of ours.

Note the distinction between doing the will and perfecting the work. That implies that Jesus Christ, like us, reached forward, in each successive act of obedience to the successive manifestations of the Father's will, to something still undone. The work will never be perfected or finished except on condition of continual fulfilment, moment by moment, of the separate behests of that divine will. For the Lord, as for His servants, this was the manner of obedience, that He 'pressed towards the mark,' and by individual acts of conformity secured that at last the whole 'work' should have been so completely accomplished that He might be able to say upon the Cross, 'It is finished.' If we have any right to call ourselves His, we too have thus to live.

III. Lastly, notice the reinvigorated Christ.

I have already pointed out the lovely contrast between the two pictures, the beginning and the end of this incident; so I need not dwell upon that. The disciples wondered when they found that Christ desired and needed none of the homely sustenance that they had brought to Him. And when He answered their sympathy rather than their curiosity—for they did not ask Him any questions, but they said to Him, 'Master, eat'—with 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of,' they, in their blind, blundering fashion, could only imagine that some one had brought Him something. So they gave occasion for the great words upon which we have been touching.

Notice, however, that Christ here sets forth the lofty aim at conformity to the divine will and fulfilment of the divine Work as being the meat of the soul. It is the true food for us all. The spirit which feeds upon such food will grow and be nourished. And the soul which feeds upon its own will and fancies, and not upon the plain brown bread of obedience, which is wholesome, though it be often bitter, will feed upon ashes, which will grate upon the teeth and hurt the palate. Such a soul will be like those wretched infants that are discovered sometimes at 'baby-farms,' starved and stunted, and not grown to half their right size. If you would have your spirits strong, robust, well nourished, live by obedience, and let the will of God be the food of your souls, and all will be well.

Souls thus fed can do without a good deal that others need. Why, enthusiasm for anything lifts a man above physical necessities and lower desires, even in its poorest forms.

A regiment of soldiers making a forced march, or an athlete trying to break the record, will tramp, tramp on, not needing food, or rest, or sleep, until they have achieved their purpose, poor and ignoble though it may be. In all regions of life, enthusiasm and lofty aims make the soul lord of the body and of the world.

And in the Christian life we shall be thus lords, exactly in proportion to the depth and earnestness of our desires to do the will of God. They who thus are fed can afford 'to scorn delights and live laborious days.' They who thus are fed can afford to do with plain living, if there be high impulses as well as high thinking. And sure I am that nothing is more certain to stamp out the enthusiasm of obedience which ought to mark the Christian life than the luxurious fashion of living which is getting so common to-day amongst professing Christians.

It is not in vain that we read the old story about the Jewish boys whose faces were radiant and whose flesh was firmer when they were fed on pulse and water than on all the wine and dainties of the Babylonish court. 'Set a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite,' and let us remember that the less we use, and the less we feel that we need, of outward goods, the nearer do we approach to the condition in which holy desires and lofty aims will visit our spirits.

I commend to you, brethren, the story of our text, in its most literal application, as well as in the loftier spiritual lessons that may be drawn from it. To be near Christ, and to desire to live for Him, delivers us from dependence upon earthly things; and in those who thus do live the old word shall be fulfilled, 'Better is a little that a righteous man hath, than the abundance of many wicked.'

'GIVE ME TO DRINK'

'... Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink.... Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.'—JOHN iv. 7, 26.

This Evangelist very significantly sets side by side our Lord's conversations with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria. The persons are very different: the one a learned Rabbi of reputation, influence, and large theological knowledge of the then fashionable kind; the other an alien woman, poor—for she had to do this menial task of water-drawing in the heat of the day—and of questionable character.

The diversity of persons necessitates great differences in the form of our Lord's address to each; but the resemblances are as striking as the divergencies. In both we have His method of gradually unveiling the truth to a susceptible soul, beginning with symbol and a hint, gradually enlarging the hint and translating the symbol; and finally unveiling Himself as the Giver and the Gift. There is another resemblance; in both the characteristic gift is that of the Spirit of Life, and, perhaps, in both the symbol is the same. For we read in one of 'water and the Spirit'; and in the other of the fountain within, springing into everlasting life. However that may be, the process of teaching is all but identical in substance in both cases, though in form so various.

The words of our Lord which I have taken for our text now are His first and last utterance in this conversation. What a gulf lies between! They are linked together by the intervening sayings, and constitute with these a great ladder, of which the foot is fast on earth, and the top fixed in heaven. On the one hand, He owns the lowest necessities; on the other, He makes the highest claims. Let us ponder on this remarkable juxtaposition, and try to gather the lessons that are plain in it.

I. First, then, I think we see here the mystery of the dependent Christ.

'Give Me to drink': 'I am He.' Try to see the thing for a moment with the woman's eyes. She comes down from her little village, up amongst the cliffs on the hillside, across the narrow, hot valley, beneath the sweltering sunshine reflected from the bounding mountains, and she finds, in the midst of the lush vegetation round the ancient well, a solitary, weary Jew, travel-worn, evidently exhausted—for His disciples had gone away to buy food, and He was too wearied to go with them—looking into the well, but having no dipper or vessel by which to get any of its cool treasure. We lose a great deal of the meaning of Christ's request if we suppose that it was merely a way of getting into conversation with the woman, a 'breaking of the ice.' It was a great deal more than that. It was the utterance of a felt and painful necessity, which He Himself could not supply without a breach of what He conceived to be His filial dependence. He could have brought water out of the well. He did not need to depend upon the pitcher that the disciples had perhaps unthinkingly carried away with them when they went to buy bread. He did not need to ask the woman to give, but He chose to do so. We lose much if we do not see in this incident far more than the woman saw, but we lose still more if we do not see what she did see. And the words which

the Master spoke to her are no mere way of introducing a conversation on religious themes; but He asked for a draught which He needed, and which He had no other way of getting.

So, then, here stands, pathetically set forth before us, our Lord's true participation in two of the distinguishing characteristics of our weak humanity—subjection to physical necessities and dependence on kindly help. We find Him weary, hungry, thirsty, sometimes slumbering. And all these instances are documents and proofs for us that He was a true man like ourselves, and that, like ourselves, He depended on 'the woman that ministered to Him' for the supply of His necessities, and so knew the limitations of our social and else helpless humanity.

But then a wearied and thirsty man is nothing of much importance. But here is a Man who *humbled Himself* to be weary and to thirst. The keynote of this Gospel, the one thought which unlocks all its treasures, and to the elucidation of which, in all its aspects, the whole book is devoted, is, 'The Word was made flesh.' Only when you let in the light of the last utterance of our text, 'I that speak unto thee am He,' do we understand the pathos, the sublimity, the depth and blessedness of meaning which lie in the first one, 'Give Me to drink.' When we see that He bowed Himself, and willingly stretched out His hands for the fetters, we come to understand the significance of these traces of His manhood. The woman says, with wonder, 'How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?' and that was wonderful. But, as He hints to her, if she had known more clearly who this Person was, that seemed to be a Jew, a deeper wonder would have crept over her spirit. The wonder is that the Eternal Word should need the water of the well, and should ask it of a poor human creature.

And why this humiliation? He could, as I have said, have wrought a miracle. He that fed five thousand, He that had turned water into wine at the rustic marriage-feast, would have had no difficulty in quenching His thirst if he had chosen to use His miraculous power therefore. But He here shows us that the true filial spirit will rather die than cast off its dependence on the Father, and the same motive which led Him to reject the temptation in the wilderness, and to answer with sublime confidence, 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God,' forbids Him here to use other means of securing the draught that He so needed than the appeal to the sympathy of an alien, and the swift compassion of a woman's heart.

And then, let us remember that the motive of this willing acceptance of the limitations and weaknesses of humanity is, in the deepest analysis, simply His love to us; as the mediaeval hymn has it, 'Seeking me, Thou satest weary.'

In that lonely Traveller, worn, exhausted, thirsty, craving for a draught of water from a stranger's hand, is set forth 'the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth.' A strange manifestation of divine glory this! But if we understand that the glory of God is the lustrous light of His self-revealing love, perhaps we shall understand how, from that faint, craving voice, 'Give Me to drink,' that glory sounds forth more than in the thunders that rolled about the rocky peak of Sinai. Strange to think, brethren, that the voice from those lips dry with thirst, which was low and weak, was the voice that spoke to the sea, 'Peace! be still,' and there was a calm; that said to demons, 'Come out of him!' and they evacuated their

fortress; that cast its command into the grave of Lazarus, and he came forth; and which one day all that are in the grave shall hear, and hearing shall obey. 'Give Me to drink.' 'I that speak unto thee am He.'

II. Secondly, we may note here the self-revealing Christ.

The process by which Jesus gradually unveils His full character to this woman, so unspiritual and unsusceptible as she appeared at first sight to be, is interesting and instructive. It would occupy too much of your time for me to do more than set it before you in the barest outline. Noting the singular divergence between the two sayings which I have taken as our text, it is interesting to notice how the one gradually merges into the other. First of all, Jesus Christ, as it were, opens a finger of His hand to let the woman have a glimpse of the gift lying there, that that may kindle desire, and hints at some occult depth in His person and nature all undreamed of by her yet, and which would be the occasion of greater wonder, and of a reversal of their parts, if she knew it. Then, in answer to her, half understanding that He meant more than met the ear, and yet opposing the plain physical difficulties that were in the way, in that He had 'nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,' and asking whether He were greater than our father Jacob, who also had given, and given not only a draught, but the well, our Lord enlarges her vision of the blessedness of the gift, though He says but little more of its nature, except in so far as that may be gathered from the fact that the water that He will give will be a permanent source of satisfaction, forbidding the pangs of unquenched desire ever again to be felt as pangs; and from the other fact that it will be an inward possession, leaping up with a fountain's energy, and a life within itself, towards, and into everlasting life. Next, he strongly assails conscience and demands repentance, and reveals Himself as the reader of the secrets of the heart. Then He discloses the great truths of spiritual worship. And, finally, as a prince in disguise might do, He flings aside the mantle of which He had let a fold or two be blown back in the previous conversation, and stands confessed. 'I that speak unto thee am He.' That is to say, the kindling of desire, the proffer of the all-satisfying gift, the quickening of conscience, the revelation of a Father to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and the final full disclosure of His person and office as the Giver of the gift which shall slake all the thirsts of men—these are the stages of His self-revelation.

Then note, not only the process, but the substance of the revelation of Himself. The woman had a far more spiritual and lofty conception of the office of Messiah than the Jews had. It is not the first time that heretics have reached a loftier ideal of some parts of the truth than the orthodox attain. To the Jew the Messiah was a conquering king, who would help them to ride on the necks of their enemies, and pay back their persecutions and oppressions. To this Samaritan woman—speaking, I suppose, the conceptions of her race—the Messiah was One who was to '*tell* us all things.'

Jesus Christ accepts the position, endorses her anticipations, and in effect presents Himself before her and before us as the Fountain of all certitude and knowledge in regard to spiritual matters. For all that we can know, or need to know, with regard to God and man and their mutual relations; for all that we can or need know in regard to manhood, its ideal, its obligations, its possibilities, its destinies; for all that we need to know of men in their relation to one another, we have to turn to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who 'will tell us all things.' He is the Fountain of light; He is the Foundation of certitude; and they who seek,

not hypotheses and possibilities and conjectures and dreams, but the solid substance of a reliable knowledge, must grasp Him, and esteem the words of His mouth and the deeds of His life more than their necessary food.

He meets this woman's conceptions as He had met those of Nicodemus. To him He had unveiled Himself as the Son of God, and the Son of Man who came down from heaven, and is in heaven, and ascends to heaven. To the woman He reveals Himself as the Messiah, who will tell us all truth, and to both as the Giver of the gift which shall communicate and sustain and refresh the better life. But I cannot help dwelling for a moment upon the remarkable, beautiful, and significant designation which our Lord employs here. 'I that speak unto thee.' The word in the original, translated by our version 'speak,' is even more sweet, because more familiar, and conveys the idea of unrestrained frank intercourse. Perhaps we might render 'I who am talking with Thee!' and that our Lord desired to emphasise to the woman's heart the notion of His familiar intercourse with her, Messiah though He were, seems to me confirmed by the fact that He uses the same expression, with additional grace and tenderness about it, when He says, with such depth of meaning, to the blind man whom He had healed, 'Thou hast both seen Him,' with the eyes to which He gave sight and object of sight, 'and it is He that *talketh* with thee.' The familiar Christ who will come and speak to us face to face and heart to heart, 'as a man speaketh with his friend,' is the Christ who will tell us all things, and whom we may wholly trust.

Note too how this revelation has for its condition the docile acceptance of the earlier and imperfect teachings. If the woman had not yielded herself to our Lord's earlier words, and, though with very dim insight, yet with a heart that sought to be taught, followed Him as He stepped from round to round of the ascending ladder, she had never stood on the top and seen this great vision. If you see nothing more in Jesus Christ than a man like yourself, compassed with our infirmities, and yet sweet and gracious and good and pure, be true to what you know, and put it into practice, and be ready to accept all the light that dawns. They that begin down at the bottom with hearing 'Give me to drink,' may stand at the top, and hear Him speak to them His unveiled truth and His full glory. 'To him that hath shall be given.' 'If any man wills to do His will he shall know of the teaching.'

III. Lastly, we have here the universal Christ.

The woman wondered that, being a Jew, He spoke to her. As I have said, our Lord's first utterance is simply the expression of a real physical necessity. But it is none the less what the woman felt it to be, a strange overleaping of barriers that towered very high. A Samaritan, a woman, a sinner, is the recipient of the first clear confession from Jesus Christ of His Messiahship and dignity. She was right in her instinct that something lay behind His sweeping aside of the barriers and coming so close to her with His request. These two, the prejudices of race and the contempt for woman, two of the crying evils of the old world, were overpassed by our Lord as if He never saw them. They were too high for men's puny limbs; they made no obstacle to the march of His divine compassion. And therein lies a symbol, if you like, but none the less a prophecy that will be fulfilled, of the universal adaptation and destination of the Gospel, and its independence of all distinctions of race and sex, condition, moral character. In Jesus Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, neither bond nor free'; ye 'are all one in Christ.' If He had been but a Jew, it was wonderful that He should talk to a Samaritan. But there is nothing in the character and life

of Christ, as recorded in Scripture, more remarkable and more plain than the entire absence of any racial peculiarities, or of characteristics owing to His position in space or time. So unlike His nation was He that the very *elite* of His nation snarled at Him and said, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' So unlike them was He that one feels that a character so palpitatingly human to its core, and so impossible to explain from its surroundings, is inexplicable, but on the New Testament theory that He is not a Jew, or man only, but the Son of Man, the divine embodiment of the ideal of humanity, whose dwelling was on earth, but His origin and home in the bosom of God. Therefore Jesus Christ is the world's Christ, your Christ, my Christ, every man's Christ, the Tree of Life that stands in the midst of the garden, that all men may draw near to it and gather of its fruit.

Brother, answer His proffer of the gift as this woman did: 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not; neither go all the way to the world's broken cisterns to draw'; and He will put into your hearts that indwelling fountain of life, so that you may say like this woman's townspeople: 'Now I have heard Him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

'Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.'—JOHN iv. 10.

This Gospel has two characteristics seldom found together: deep thought and vivid character-drawing. Nothing can be more clear-cut and dramatic than the scene in the chapter before us. There is not a word of description of this Samaritan woman. She paints herself, and it is not a beautiful picture. She is apparently of the peasant class, from a little village nestling on the hill above the plain, come down in the broiling sunshine to Jacob's well. She is of mature age, and has had a not altogether reputable past. She is frivolous, ready to talk with strangers, with a tongue quick to turn grave things into jests; and yet she possesses, hidden beneath masses of unclean vanities, a conscience and a yearning for something better than she has, which Christ's words awoke, and which was finally so enkindled as to make her fit to receive the full declaration of His Messiahship, which Pharisees and priests could not be trusted with.

I need scarcely do more than remind you of the way in which the conversation between this strangely assorted pair began. The solitary Jew, sitting spent with travel on the well, asks for a draught of water; not in order to get an opening for preaching, but because He needs it. She replies with an exclamation of light wonder, half a jest and half a sarcasm, and challenging a response in the same tone.

But Christ lifts her to a higher level by the words of my text, which awed levity, and prepared for a fuller revelation. 'Thou dost wonder that I, being a Jew, ask drink of thee, a Samaritan. If thou knewest who I am, thy wonder at My asking would be more. If thou knewest what I have to give, we should change places, and thou wouldest ask, and I should bestow.'

So then, we have here gift, Giver, way of getting, and ignorance that hinders asking. Let us look at these.

I. First, the gift of God. Now it is quite clear that our Lord means the same thing, whatever it may be, by the two expressions, the 'gift of God' and the 'living water.' For, unless He does, the whole sequence of my text falls to pieces. 'Living water' was suggested, no doubt, by the circumstances of the moment. There, in the well, was an ever-springing source, and, says He, a like supply, ever welling up for thirsty lips and foul hands, ever sweet and ever sufficient, God is ready to give.

We may remember how, all through Scripture, we hear the tinkle of these waters as they run. The force of the expression is to be gathered largely from the Old Testament and the uses of the metaphor there. It has been supposed that by the 'living water' which God gives is here meant some one specific gift, such as that of the Holy Spirit, which sometimes is expressed by the metaphor. Rather I should be disposed to say the 'living water' is eternal

life. 'With Thee is the fountain of life.' And so, in the last resort, the gift of God is God Himself. Nothing else will suffice for us, brethren. We need Him, and we need none but Him.

Our Lord, in the subsequent part of this conversation, again touches upon this great metaphor, and suggests one or two characteristics, blessings, and excellences of it. 'It shall be *in* him,' it is something that we may carry about with us in our hearts, inseparable from our being, free from all possibility of being filched away by violence, being rent from us by sorrows, or even being parted from us by death. What a man has outside of him he only seems to have. Our only real possessions are those which have passed into the substance of our souls. All else we shall leave behind. The only good is inward good; and this water of life slakes our thirst because it flows into the deepest place of our being, and abides there for ever.

Oh! you that are seeking your satisfaction from fountains that remain outside of you after all your efforts, learn that all of them, by reason of their externality, will sooner or later be 'broken cisterns that can hold no water.' And I beseech you, if you want rest for your souls and stilling for their yearnings, look for it there, where only it can be found, in Him, who not only dwells in the heavens to rule and to shower down blessings, but enters into the waiting heart and abides there, the inward, and therefore the only real, possession and riches. 'It shall be in him a fountain of water.'

It is 'springing up'—with an immortal energy, with ever fresh fulness, by its own inherent power, needing no pumps nor machinery, but ever welling forth its refreshment, an emblem of the joyous energy and continual freshness of vitality, which is granted to those who carry God in their hearts, and therefore can never be depressed beyond measure, nor ever feel that the burden of life is too heavy to bear, or its sorrows too sharp to endure.

It springs up 'into eternal life,' for water must seek its source, and rise to the level of its origin, and this fountain within a man, that reaches up ever towards the eternal life from which it came, and which it gives to its possessor, will bear him up, as some strong spring will lift the clods that choked its mouth, will bear him up towards the eternal life which is native to it, and therefore native to him.

Brethren, no man is so poor, so low, so narrow in capacity, so limited in heart and head, but that he needs a whole God to make him restful. Nothing else will. To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is like sailors who in their desperation, when the water-tanks are empty, slake their thirst with the treacherous blue that washes cruelly along the battered sides of their ship. A moment's alleviation is followed by the recurrence, in tenfold intensity, of the pangs of thirst, and by madness, and death. Do not drink the salt water that flashes and rolls by your side when you can have recourse to the fountain of life that is with God.

'Oh!' you say, 'commonplace, threadbare pulpit rhetoric.' Yes! Do you live as if it were true? It will never be too threadbare to be dinned into your head until it has passed into your lives and regulated them.

II. Now, in the next place, notice the Giver.

Jesus Christ blends in one sentence, startling in its boldness, the gift of God, and Himself as the Bestower. This Man, exhausted for want of a draught of water, speaks with parched

lips a claim most singularly in contrast with the request which He had just made: 'I will give thee the living water.' No wonder that the woman was bewildered, and could only say, 'The well is deep, and Thou hast nothing to draw with.' She might have said, 'Why then dost Thou ask me?' The words were meant to create astonishment, in order that the astonishment might awaken interest, which would lead to the capacity for further illumination. Suppose you had been there, had seen the Man whom she saw, had heard the two things that she heard, and knew no more about Him than she knew, what would *you* have thought of Him and His words? Perhaps you would have been more contemptuous than she was. See to it that, since you know so much that explains and warrants them, you do not treat them worse than she did.

Jesus Christ claims to give God's gifts. He is able to give to that poor, frivolous, impure-hearted and impure-lifed woman, at her request, the eternal life which shall still all the thirst of her soul, that had often in the past been satiated and disgusted, but had never been satisfied by any of its draughts.

And He claims that in this giving He is something more than a channel, because, says He, 'If thou hadst asked of Me I would give thee.' We sometimes think of the relation between God and Christ as being typified by that of some land-locked sea amidst remote mountains, and the affluent that brings its sparkling treasures to the thirsting valley. But Jesus Christ is no mere vehicle for the conveyance of a divine gift, but His own heart, His own power, His own love are in it; and it is His gift just as much as it is God's.

Now I do not do more than pause for one moment to ask you to think of what inference is necessarily involved in such a claim as this. If we know anything about Jesus Christ at all, we know that He spoke in this tone, not occasionally, but habitually. It will not do to pick out other bits of His character or actions and admire these and ignore the characteristic of His teachings—His claims for Himself. And I have only this one word to say, if Jesus Christ ever said anything the least like the words of my text, and if they were not true, what was He but a fanatic who had lost His head in the fancy of His inspiration? And if He said these words and they *were* true, what is He then? What but that which this Gospel insists from its beginning to its end that He was—the Eternal Word of God, by whom all divine revelation from the beginning has been made, and who at last 'became flesh' that we might 'receive of His fulness,' and therein 'be filled with all the fulness of God.' Other alternative I, for my part, see none.

But I would have you notice, too, the connection between these human needs of the Saviour and His power to give the divine gift. Why did He not simply say to this woman, 'If thou knewest who I am?' Why did He use this periphrasis of my text, 'Who it is that saith unto thee, "Give Me to drink"'? Why but because He wanted to fix her attention on the startling contradiction between His appearance and His claims—on the one hand asserting divine prerogative, on the other forcing into prominence human weakness and necessity, because these two things, the human weakness and the divine prerogative, are inseparably braided together and intertwined. Some of you will remember the great scene in Shakespeare where the weakness of Caesar is urged as a reason for rejecting his imperial authority:—

'Ay! and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas! it cried, "Give me some drink, …
Like a sick girl."'

And the inference that is drawn is, how can he be fit to be a ruler of men? But we listen to our Caesar and Emperor, when He asks this woman for water, and when He says on the Cross, 'I thirst,' and we feel that these are not the least of His titles to be crowned with many crowns. They bring Him nearer to us, and they are the means by which His love reaches its end, of bestowing upon us all, if we will have it, the cup of salvation. Unless He had said the one of these two things, He never could have said the other. Unless the dry lips had petitioned, 'Give Me to drink,' the gracious lips could never have said, 'I will give thee living water.' Unless, like Jacob of old, this Shepherd could say, 'In the day the drought consumed Me,' it would have been impossible that the flock 'shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, … for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water.'

III. Again, notice how to get the gift.

Christ puts together, as if they were all but contemporaneous, 'thou wouldst have asked of Me,' and 'I would have given thee.' The hand on the telegraph transmits the message, and back, swift as the lightning, flashes the response. The condition, the only condition, and the indispensable condition, of possessing that water of life—the summary expression for all the gifts of God in Jesus Christ, which at the last are essentially God Himself—is the desire to possess it turned to Jesus Christ. Is it not strange that men should not desire; is it not strange and sad that such foolish creatures are we that we do not want what we need; that our wishes and needs are often diametrically opposite? All men desire happiness, but some of us have so vitiated our tastes and our palates by fiery intoxicants that the water of life seems dreadfully tasteless and unstimulating, and so we will rather go back again to the delusive, poisoned drinks than glue our lips to the river of God's pleasures.

But it is not enough that there should be the desire. It must be turned to Him. In fact the asking of my text, so far as you and I are concerned, is but another way of speaking the great keyword of personal religion, faith in Jesus Christ. For they who ask, know their necessity, are convinced of the power of Him to whom they appeal to grant their requests, and rely upon His love to do so. And these three things, the sense of need, the conviction of Christ's ability to save and to satisfy, and of His infinite love that desires to make us blessed—these three things fused together make the faith which receives the gift of God.

Remember, brethren, that another of the scriptural expressions for the act of trusting in Him, is *taking*, not asking. You do not need to ask, as if for something that is not provided. What we all need to do is to open our eyes to see what is there. If we like to put out our hands and take it. Why should we be saying, 'Give me to drink,' when a pierced hand reaches out to us the cup of salvation, and says, 'Drink ye all of it'? 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come … and drink … without money and without price.'

There is no other condition but desire turned to Christ, and that is the necessary condition. God cannot give men salvation, as veterinary surgeons drench unwilling horses—forcing the medicine down their throats through clenched teeth. There must be

the opened mouth, and wherever there is, there will be the full supply. 'Ask, and ye shall receive'; take, and ye shall possess.

IV. Lastly, mark the ignorance that prevents asking.

Jesus Christ looked at this poor woman and discerned in her, though, as I said, it was hidden beneath mountains of folly and sin, a thirsty soul that was dimly longing for something better. And He believed that, if once the mystery of His being and the mercy of God's gifts were displayed before her, she would melt into a yearning of desire that is certain to be fulfilled. In some measure the same thing is true of us all. For surely, surely, if only you saw realities, and things as they are, some of you would not be content to continue as you are—without this water of life. Blind, blind, blind, are the men who grope at noon-day as in the dark and turn away from Jesus. If you knew, not with the head only, but with the whole nature, if you knew the thirst of your soul, the sweetness of the water, the readiness of the Giver, and the dry and parched land to which you condemn yourselves by your refusal, surely you would bethink yourself and fall at His feet and ask, and get, the water of life.

But, brethren, there is a worse case than ignorance; there is the case of people that know and refuse, not by reason of imperfect knowledge, but by reason of averted will. And I beseech you to ponder whether that may not be your condition. 'Whosoever *will*, let him come.' 'Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye might have life.' I do not think I venture much when I say that I am sure there are people hearing me now, not Christians, who are as certain, deep down in their hearts, that the only rest of the soul is in God, and the only way to get it is through Christ, as any saint of God's ever was. But the knowledge does not touch their will because they like the poison and they do not want the life.

Oh! dear friends, the instantaneousness of Christ's answer, and the certainty of it, are as true for each of us as they were for this woman. The offer is made to us all, just as it was to her. We can gather round that Rock like the Israelites in the wilderness, and slake every thirst of our souls from its outgushing streams. Jesus Christ says to each of us, as He did to her, tenderly, warningly, invitingly, and yet rebukingly, 'If thou knewest … thou wouldst ask, … and I would give.'

Take care lest, by continual neglect, you force Him at last to change His words, and to lament over you, as He did over the city that He loved so well, and yet destroyed. 'If thou *hadst* known in thy day the things that belong to thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes.'

THE SPRINGING FOUNTAIN

'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'—JOHN iv. 14.

There are two kinds of wells, one a simple reservoir, another containing the waters of a spring. It is the latter kind which is spoken about here, as is clear not only from the meaning of the word in the Greek, but also from the description of it as 'springing up.' That suggests at once the activity of a fountain. A fountain is the emblem of motion, not of rest. Its motion is derived from itself, not imparted to it from without. Its 'silvery column' rises ever heavenward, though gravitation is too strong for it, and drags it back again.

So Christ promises to this ignorant, sinful Samaritan woman that if she chose He would plant in her soul a gift which would thus well up, by its own inherent energy, and fill her spirit with music, and refreshment, and satisfaction.

What is that gift? The answer may be put in various ways which really all come to one. It is Himself, the unspeakable Gift, His own greatest gift; or it is the Spirit 'which they that believe on Him should receive,' and whereby He comes and dwells in men's hearts; or it is the resulting life, kindred with the life bestowed, a consequence of the indwelling Christ and the present Spirit.

And so the promise is that they who believe in Him and rest upon His love shall receive into their spirits a new life principle which shall rise in their hearts like a fountain, 'springing up into everlasting life.'

I think we shall best get the whole depth and magnitude of this great promise if, throwing aside all mere artificial order, we simply take the words as they stand here in the text, and think, first, of Christ's gift as a fountain within; then as a fountain springing, leaping up, by its own power; and then as a fountain 'springing into everlasting life.'

I. First, Christ's gift is represented here as a fountain within.

Most men draw their supplies from without; they are rich, happy, strong, only when externals minister to them strength, happiness, riches. For the most of us, what we have is that which determines our felicity.

Take the lowest type of life, for instance, the men of whom the majority, alas! I suppose, in every time is composed, who live altogether on the low plane of the world, and for the world alone, whether their worldliness take the form of sensuous appetite, or of desire to acquire wealth and outward possessions. The thirst of the body is the type of the experience of all such people. It is satisfied and slaked for a moment, and then back comes the tyrannous appetite again. And, alas! the things that you drink to satisfy the thirst of your souls are too often like a publican's adulterated beer, which has got salt in it, and chemicals, and all sorts of things to stir up, instead of slaking and quenching, the thirst. So 'he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' The appetite grows by what it feeds on, and a little lust yielded to to-day is a bigger one to-morrow, and half a glass to-day grows to a bottle in a twelvemonth. As the

old classical saying has it, he 'who begins by carrying a calf, before long is able to carry an ox'; so the thirst in the soul needs and drinks down a constantly increasing draught.

And even if we rise up into a higher region and look at the experience of the men who have in some measure learned that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth,' nor in the abundance of the gratification that his animal nature gets, but that there must be an inward spring of satisfaction, if there is to be any satisfaction at all; if we take men who live for thought, and truth, and mental culture, and yield themselves up to the enthusiasm for some great cause, and are proud of saying, 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' though they present a far higher style of life than the former, yet even that higher type of man has so many of his roots in the external world that he is at the mercy of chances and changes, and he, too, has deep in his heart a thirst that nothing, no truth, no wisdom, no culture, nothing that addresses itself to one part of his nature, though it be the noblest and the loftiest, can ever satisfy and slake.

I am sure I have some such people in my audience, and to them this message comes. You may have, if you will, in your own hearts, a springing fountain of delight and of blessedness which will secure that no unsatisfied desires shall ever torment you. Christ in His fulness, His Spirit, the life that flows from both and is planted within our hearts, these are offered to us all; and if we have them we carry inclosed within ourselves all that is essential to our felicity; and we can say, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be self-satisfying,' not with the proud, stoical independence of a man who does not want either God or man to make him blessed, but with the humble independence of a man who can say 'my sufficiency is of God.'

No independence of externals is possible, nor wholesome if it were possible, except that which comes from absolute dependence on Jesus Christ.

If you have Christ in your heart then life is possible, peace is possible, joy is possible, under all circumstances and in all places. Everything which the soul can desire, it possesses. You will be like the garrison of a beleaguered castle, in the courtyard of which is a sparkling spring, fed from some source high up in the mountains, and finding its way in there by underground channels which no besiegers can ever touch. Sorrows will come, and make you sad, but though there may be much darkness round about you, there will be light in the darkness. The trees may be bare and leafless, but the sap has gone down to the roots. The world may be all wintry and white with snow, but there will be a bright little fire burning on your own hearthstone. You will carry within yourselves all the essentials to blessedness. If you have 'Christ in the vessel' you can smile at the storm. They that drink from earth's fountains 'shall thirst again'; but they who have Christ in their hearts will have a fountain within which will not freeze in the bitterest cold, nor fail in the fiercest heat. 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain.'

II. Christ's gift is a springing fountain.

The emblem, of course, suggests motion by its own inherent impulse. Water may be stagnant, or it may yield to the force of gravity and slide down a descending river-bed, or it may be pumped up and lifted by external force applied to it, or it may roll as it does in the sea, drawn by the moon, driven by the winds, borne along by currents that owe their origin

to outward heat or cold. But a fountain rises by an energy implanted within itself, and is the very emblem of joyous, free, self-dependent and self-regulated activity.

And so, says Christ, 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a springing fountain'; it shall not lie there stagnant, but leap like a living thing, up into the sunshine, and flash there, turned into diamonds, when the bright rays smile upon it.

So here is the promise of two things: the promise of activity, and of an activity which is its own law.

The promise of activity. There seems small blessing, in this overworked world, in a promise of more active exertion; but what an immense part of our nature lies dormant and torpid if we are not Christians! How much of the work that is done is dreary, wearisome, collar-work, against the grain. Do not the wheels of life often go slowly? Are you not often weary of the inexpressible monotony and fatigue? And do you not go to your work sometimes, though with a fierce feeling of 'need-to-do-it,' yet also with inward repugnance? And are there not great parts of your nature that have never woke into activity at all, and are ill at ease, because there is no field of action provided for them? The mind is like millstones; if you do not put the wheat into them to grind, they will grind each other's faces. So some of us are fretting ourselves to pieces, or are sick of a vague disease, and are morbid and miserable because the highest and noblest parts of our nature have never been brought into exercise. Surely this promise of Christ's should come as a true Gospel to such, offering, as it does, if we will trust ourselves to Him, a springing fountain of activity in our hearts that shall fill our whole being with joyous energy, and make it a delight to live and to work. It will bring to us new powers, new motives; it will set all the wheels of life going at double speed. We shall be quickened by the presence of that mighty power, even as a dim taper is brightened and flames up when plunged into a jar of oxygen. And life will be delightsome in its hardest toil, when it is toil for the sake of, and by the indwelling strength of, that great Lord and Master of our work.

And there is not only a promise of activity here, but of activity which is its own law and impulse. That is a blessed promise in two ways. In the first place, law will be changed into delight. We shall not be driven by a commandment standing over us with whip and lash, or coming behind us with spur and goad, but that which we ought to do we shall rejoice to do; and inclination and duty will coincide in all our lives when our life is Christ's life in us.

That should be a blessing to some of you who have been fighting against evil and trying to do right with more or less success, more or less interruptedly and at intervals, and have felt the effort to be a burden and a wearisomeness. Here is a promise of emancipation from all that constraint and yoke of bondage which duty discerned and unloved ever lays upon a man's shoulders. When we carry within us the gift of a life drawn from Jesus Christ, and are able to say like Him, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, and Thy law is within my heart,' only then shall we have peace and joy in our lives. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.'

And then, in the second place, that same thought of an activity which is its own impulse and its own law, suggests another aspect of this blessedness, namely, that it sets us free from the tyranny of external circumstances which absolutely shape the lives of so many of us. The lives of all must be to a large extent moulded by these, but they need not, and

should not be completely determined by them. It is a miserable thing to see men and women driven before the wind like thistledown. Circumstances must influence us, but they may either influence us to base compliance and passive reception of their stamp, or to brave resistance and sturdy nonconformity to their solicitations. So used, they will influence us to a firmer possession of the good which is most opposite to them, and we shall be the more unlike our surroundings, the more they abound in evil. You can make your choice whether, if I may so say, you shall be like balloons that are at the mercy of the gale and can only shape their course according as it comes upon them and blows them along, or like steamers that have an inward power that enables them to keep their course from whatever point the wind blows, or like some sharply built sailing-ship that, with a strong hand at the helm, and canvas rightly set, can sail almost in the teeth of the wind and compel it to bear her along in all but the opposite direction to that in which it would carry her if she lay like a log on the water.

I beseech you all, and especially you young people, not to let the world take and shape you, like a bit of soft clay put into a brick-mould, but to lay a masterful hand upon it, and compel it to help you, by God's grace, to be nobler, and truer, and purer.

It is a shame for men to live the lives that so many amongst us live, as completely at the mercy of externals to determine the direction of their lives as the long weeds in a stream that yield to the flow of the current. It is of no use to preach high and brave maxims, telling men to assert their lordship over externals, unless we can tell them how to find the inward power that will enable them to do so. But we can preach such noble exhortations to some purpose when we can point to the great gift which Christ is ready to give, and exhort them to open their hearts to receive that indwelling power which shall make them free from the dominion of these tyrant circumstances and emancipate them into the 'liberty of the sons of God.' 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a leaping fountain.'

III. The last point here is that Christ's gift is a fountain 'springing up into everlasting life.'

The water of a fountain rises by its own impulse, but howsoever its silver column may climb it always falls back into its marble basin. But this fountain rises higher, and at each successive jet higher, tending towards, and finally touching, its goal, which is at the same time its course. The water seeks its own level, and the fountain climbs until it reaches Him from whom it comes, and the eternal life in which He lives. We might put that thought in two ways. First, the gift is eternal in its duration. The water with which the world quenches its thirst perishes. All supplies and resources dry up like winter torrents in summer heat. All created good is but for a time. As for some, it perishes in the use; as for other, it evaporates and passes away, or is 'as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up'; as for all, we have to leave it behind when we go hence. But this gift springs into everlasting life, and when we go it goes with us. The Christian character is identical in both worlds, and however the forms and details of pursuits may vary, the essential principle remains one. So that the life of a Christian man on earth and his life in heaven are but one stream, as it were, which may, indeed, like some of those American rivers, run for a time through a deep, dark canyon, or in an underground passage, but comes out at the further end into broader, brighter plains and summer lands; where it flows with a quieter current and with the sunshine reflected on its untroubled surface, into the calm ocean. He

has one gift and one life for earth and heaven—Christ and His Spirit, and the life that is consequent upon both.

And then the other side of this great thought is that the gift tends to, is directed towards, or aims at and reaches, everlasting life. The whole of the Christian experience on earth is a prophecy and an anticipation of heaven. The whole of the Christian experience of earth evidently aims towards that as its goal, and is interpreted by that as its end. What a contrast that is to the low and transient aims which so many of us have! The lives of many men go creeping along the surface when they might spring heavenwards. My friend! which is it to be with you? Is your life to be like one of those Northern Asiatic rivers that loses itself in the sands, or that flows into, or is sluggishly lost in, a bog; or is it going to tumble over a great precipice, and fall sounding away down into the blackness; or is it going to leap up 'into everlasting life'? Which of the two aims is the wiser, is the nobler, is the better?

And a life that thus springs will reach what it springs towards. A fountain rises and falls, for the law of gravity takes it down; this fountain rises and reaches, for the law of pressure takes it up, and the water rises to the level of its source. Christ's gift mocks no man, it sets in motion no hopes that it does not fulfil; it stimulates to no work that it does not crown with success. If you desire a life that reaches its goal, a life in which all your desires are satisfied, a life that is full of joyous energy, that of a free man emancipated from circumstances and from the tyranny of unwelcome law, and victorious over externals, open your hearts to the gift that Christ offers you; the gift of Himself, of His death and passion, of His sacrifice and atonement, of His indwelling and sanctifying Spirit.

He offered all the fulness of that grace to this Samaritan woman, in her ignorance, in her profligacy, in her flippancy. He offers it to you. His offer awoke an echo in her heart, will it kindle any response in yours? Oh! when He says to you, 'The water that I shall give will be in you a fountain springing into everlasting life,' I pray you to answer as she did—'Sir!—Lord—give me this water, that I thirst not; neither come to earth's broken cisterns to draw.'

THE SECOND MIRACLE

'This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judaea into Galilee.'—JOHN iv. 54.

The Evangelist evidently intends us to connect together the two miracles in Cana. His object may, possibly, be mainly chronological, and to mark the epochs in our Lord's ministry. But we cannot fail to see how remarkably these two miracles are contrasted. The one takes place at a wedding, a homely scene of rural festivity and gladness. But life has deeper things in it than gladness, and a Saviour who preferred the house of feasting to the house of mourning would be no Saviour for us. The second miracle, then, turns to the darker side of human experience. The happiest home has its saddened hours; the truest marriage joy has associated with it many a care and many an anxiety. Therefore, He who began by breathing blessing over wedded joy goes on to answer the piteous pleading of parental anxiety. It was fitting that the first miracle should deal with gladness, for that is God's purpose for His creatures, and that the second should deal with sicknesses and sorrows, which are additions to that purpose made needful by sin.

Again, the first miracle was wrought without intercession, as the outcome of Christ's own determination that His hour for working it was come. The second miracle was drawn from Him by the imperfect faith and the agonising pleading of the father.

But the great peculiarity of this second miracle in Cana is that it is moulded throughout so as to develop and perfect a weak faith. Notice how there are three words in the narrative, each of which indicates a stage in the history. 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not *believe*.' … 'The man *believed* the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.' … 'Himself *believed* and his whole house.'

We have here, then, Christ manifested as the Discerner, the Rebuker, the Answerer, and therefore the Strengthener, of a very insufficient and ignorant faith. It is a lovely example of the truth of that ancient prophecy, 'He will not quench the smoking flax.' So these three stages, as it seems to me, are the three points to observe. We have, first of all, Christ lamenting over an imperfect faith. Then we have Him testing, and so strengthening, a growing faith. And then we have the absent Christ rewarding and crowning a tested faith. I think if we look at these three stages in the story we shall get the main points which the Evangelist intends us to observe.

I. First, then, we have here our Lord lamenting over an ignorant and sensuous faith.

At first sight His words, in response to the hurried, eager appeal of the father, seem to be strangely unfeeling, far away from the matter in hand. Think of how breathlessly, feeling that not an instant is to be lost, the poor man casts himself at the Master's feet, and pleads that his boy is 'at the point of death.' And just think how, like a dash of cold water upon this hot impatience, must have come these strange words that seem to overleap his case altogether, and to be gazing beyond him—'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not

believe.' 'What has that to do with me and my dying boy, and my impatient agony of petition?' 'It has everything to do with you.'

It is the revelation, first of all, of Christ's singular calmness and majestic leisure, which befitted Him who needed not to hurry, because He was conscious of absolute power. As when the pleading message was sent to Him: 'He whom Thou lovest is sick, He abode still two days in the same place where He was'; because He loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary; and just as when Jairus is hurrying Him to the bed where his child lies dead, He pauses on the way to attend to the petition of another sufferer; so, in like calmness of majestic leisure, He here puts aside the apparently pressing and urgent necessity in order to deal with a far deeper, more pressing one.

For in the words there is not only a revelation of our Lord's majestic leisure, but there is also an indication of what He thought of most importance in His dealing with men. It was worthy of His care to heal the boy; it was far more needful that He should train and lead the father to faith. The one can wait much better than the other.

And there is in the words, too, something like a sigh of profound sorrow. Christ is not so much rebuking as lamenting. It is His own pained heart that speaks; He sees in the man before Him more than the man's words indicated; reading his heart with that divine omniscience which pierces beyond the surface, and beholding in him the very same evil which affected all his countrymen. So He speaks to him as one of a class, and thus somewhat softens the rebuke even while the answer to the nobleman's petition seems thereby to become still less direct, and His own sorrowful gaze at the wide-reaching spirit of blindness seems thereby to become more absorbed and less conscious of the individual sufferer kneeling at His feet.

Christ had just come from Samaria, the scorn of the Jews, and there He had found people who needed no miracles, whose conception of the Messiah was not that of a mere wonder-worker, but of one who will 'tell us all things,' and who believed on Him not because of the portents which He wrought, but because they heard Him themselves, and His words touched their consciences and stirred strange longings in their hearts. On the other hand, this Evangelist has carefully pointed out in the preceding chapters how such recognition as Christ had thus far received 'in His own country' had been entirely owing to His miracles, and had been therefore regarded by Christ Himself as quite unreliable (chap. ii. 23-25), while even Nicodemus, the Pharisee, had seen no better reason for regarding Him as a divinely sent Teacher than 'these miracles that Thou doest.' And now here He is no sooner across the border again than the same spirit meets Him. He hears it even in the pleading, tearful tones of the father's voice, and that so clearly that it is for a moment more prominent even to His pity than the agony and the prayer. And over that Christ sorrows. Why? Because, to their own impoverishing, the nobleman and his fellows were blind to all the beauty of His character. The graciousness of His nature was nothing to them. They had no eyes for His tenderness and no ears for His wisdom; but if some vulgar sign had been wrought before them, then they would have run after Him with their worthless faith. And that struck a painful chord in Christ's heart when He thought of how all the lavishing of His love, all the grace and truth which shone radiant and lambent in His life, fell upon blind eyes, incapable of beholding His beauty; and of how the manifest revelation of a Godlike character had no power to do what could be done by a mere outward wonder.

This is not to disparage the 'miraculous evidence.' It is only to put in its proper place the spirit, which was blind to the self-attesting glory of His character, which beheld it and did not recognise it as 'the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.'

That very same blindness to the divine which is in Jesus Christ, because material things alone occupy the heart and appeal to the mind, is still the disease of humanity. It still drives a knife into the loving heart of the pitying and helpful Christ. The special form which it takes in such a story as this before us is long since gone. The sense-bound people of this generation do not ask for signs. Miracles are rather a hindrance than a help to the reception of Christianity in many quarters. People are more willing to admire, after a fashion, the beauty of Christ's character, and the exalted purity of His teaching (meaning thereby, generally, the parts of it which are not exclusively His), than to accept His miracles. So far round has the turn in the wheel gone in these days.

But although the form is entirely different the spirit still remains. Are there not plenty of us to whom sense is the only certitude? We think that the only knowledge is the knowledge that comes to us from that which we can see and touch and handle, and the inferences that we may draw from these; and to many all that world of thought and beauty, all those divine manifestations of tenderness and grace, are but mist and cloudland. Intellectually, though in a somewhat modified sense, this generation has to take the rebuke: 'Except ye see, ye will not believe.'

And practically do not the great mass of men regard the material world as all-important, and work done or progress achieved there as alone deserving the name of 'work' or 'progress,' while all the glories of a loving Christ are dim and unreal to their sense-bound eyes? Is it not true to-day, as it was in the old time, that if a man would come among you, and bring you material good, that would be the prophet for you? True wisdom, beauty, elevating thoughts, divine revelations; all these go over your heads. But when a man comes and multiplies loaves, then you say, 'This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world.' 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.'

And on the other side, is it not sadly true about those of us who have the purest and the loftiest faith, that we feel often as if it was very hard, almost impossible, to keep firm our grasp of One who never is manifested to our sense? Do we not often feel, 'O that I could for once, for once only, hear a voice that would speak to my outward ear, or see some movement of a divine hand'? The loftiest faith still leans towards, and has an hankering after, some external and visible manifestation, and we need to subject ourselves to the illuminating rebuke of the Master who says, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' and, therefore, your faith that craves the support of some outward thing, and often painfully feels that it is feeble without it, is as yet but very imperfect and rudimentary.

II. And so we have here, as the next stage of the narrative, our Lord testing, and thus strengthening, a growing faith.

The nobleman's answer to our Lord's strange words sounds, at first sight, as if these had passed over him, producing no effect at all. 'Sir, come down ere my child die'; it is almost as if he had said, 'Do not talk to me about these things at present. Come and heal my boy. That is what I want; and we will speak of other matters some other time.' But it is not exactly that. Clearly enough, at all events, he did not read in Christ's words a reluctance to yield to

his request, still less a refusal of it. Clearly he did not misunderstand the sad rebuke which they conveyed, else he would not have ventured to reiterate his petition. He does not pretend to anything more than he has, he does not seek to disclaim the condemnation that Christ brings against him, nor to assume that he has a loftier degree or a purer kind of faith than he possesses. He holds fast by so much of Christ's character as he can apprehend; and that is the beginning of all progress. What he knows he knows. He has sore need; that is something. He has come to the Helper; that is more. He is only groping after Him, but he will not say a word beyond what he knows and feels; and, therefore, there is something in him to work upon; and faith is already beginning to bud and blossom. And so his prayer is his best answer to Christ's word: 'Sir, come down ere my child die.'

Ah! dear brethren, any true man who has ever truly gone to Christ with a sense even of some outward and temporal need, and has ever really prayed at all, has often to pass through this experience, that the first result of his agonising cry shall be only the revelation to him of the unworthiness and imperfection of his own faith, and that there shall seem to be strange delay in the coming of the blessing so longed for. And the true attitude for a man to take when there is unveiled before him, in his consciousness, in answer to his cry for help, the startling revelation of his own unworthiness and imperfection—the true answer to such dealing is simply to reiterate the cry. And then the Master bends to the petition, and because He sees that the second prayer has in it less of sensuousness than the first, and that some little germ of a higher faith is beginning to open, He yields, and yet He does not yield. 'Sir, come down ere my child die.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth.'

Why did He not go with the suppliant? Why, in the act of granting, does He refuse? For the suppliant's sake. The whole force and beauty of the story come out yet more vividly if we take the contrast between it and the other narrative, which presents some points of similarity with it—that of the healing of the centurion's servant at Capernaum. There the centurion prays that Christ would but speak, and Christ says, 'I will come.' There the centurion does not feel that His presence is necessary, but that His word is enough. Here the nobleman says 'Come,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything unless He stands like a doctor by the boy's bed. And he says, too, 'Come, *ere my child die*,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything if his boy has once passed the dark threshold.

And because his faith is thus feeble, Christ refuses its request, because He knows that so to refuse is to strengthen. Asked but to 'speak' by a strong faith, He rewards it by more than it prays, and offers to 'come.' Asked to 'come' by a weak faith, He rewards it by less, which yet is more, than it had requested; and refuses to come, that He may heal at a distance; and thus manifests still more wondrously His power and His grace.

His gentle and wise treatment is telling; and he who was so sense-bound that 'unless he saw signs and wonders he would not believe,' turns and goes away, bearing the blessing, as he trusts, in his hands, while yet there is no sign whatever that he has received it.

Think of what a change had passed upon that man in the few moments of his contact with Christ. When he ran to His feet, all hot and breathless and impatient, with his eager plea, he sought only for the deliverance of his boy, and sought it at the moment, and cared for nothing else. When he goes away from Him, a little while afterwards, he has risen to this

height, that he believes the bare word, and turns his back upon the Healer, and sets his face to Capernaum in the confidence that he possesses the unseen gift. So has his faith grown.

And that is what you and I have to do. We have Christ's bare word, and no more, to trust to for everything. We must be content to go out of the presence-chamber of the King with only His promise, and to cleave to that. A feeble faith requires the support of something sensuous and visible, as some poor trailing plant needs a prop round which it may twist its tendrils. A stronger faith strides away from the Master, happy and peaceful in its assured possession of a blessing for which it has nothing to rely upon but a simple bare word. That is the faith that we have to exercise. Christ has spoken. That was enough for this man, who from the babyhood of Christian experience sprang at once to its maturity. Is it enough for you? Are you content to say, 'Thy word, Thy naked word, is all that I need, for Thou hast spoken, and Thou wilt do it'?

'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' What a test! Suppose the father had not gone his way, would his son have lived? No! The son's life and the father's reception from Christ of what he asked were suspended upon that one moment. Will he trust Him, or will he not? Will he linger, or will he depart? He departs, and in the act of trusting he gets the blessing, and his boy is saved.

And look how the narrative hints to us of the perfect confidence of the father now. Cana was only a few miles from Capernaum. The road from the little city upon the hill down to where the waters of the lake flashed in the sunshine by the quays of Capernaum was only a matter of a few hours; but it was the next day, and well on into the next day, before he met the servants that came to him with the news of his boy's recovery. So sure was he that his petition was answered that he did not hurry to return home, but leisurely and quietly went onwards the next day to his child. Think of the difference between the breathless rush up to Cana, and the quiet return from it. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

III. And so, lastly, we have here the absent Christ crowning and rewarding the faith which has been tested.

We have the picture of the father's return. The servants meet him. Their message, which they deliver before he has time to speak, is singularly a verbal repetition of the promise of the Master, 'Thy son liveth.' His faith, though it be strong, has not yet reached to the whole height of the blessing, for he inquires 'at what hour he began to *amend*,' expecting some slow and gradual recovery; and he is told 'that at the seventh hour,' the hour when the Master spoke, 'the fever left him,' and all at once and completely was he cured. So, more than his faith had expected is given to him; and Christ, when he lays His hand upon a man, does His work thoroughly, though not always at once.

Why was the miracle wrought in that strange fashion? Why did our Lord fling out His power as from a distance rather than go and stand at the boy's bedside? We have already seen the reason in the peculiar condition of the father's mind; but now notice what it was that he had learned by such a method of healing, not only the fact of Christ's healing power, but also the fact that the bare utterance of His will, whether He were present or absent, had power. And so a loftier conception of Christ would begin to dawn on him.

And for us that working of Christ at a distance is prophetic. It represents to us His action to-day. Still He answers our cries that He would come down to our help by sending forth

from the city on the hills, the city of the wedding feast, His healing power to descend upon the sick-beds and the sorrows and the sins that afflict the villages beneath. 'He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth, His word runneth very swiftly.'

This new experience enlarged and confirmed the man's faith. The second stage to which he had been led by Christ's treatment was simply belief in our Lord's specific promise, an immense advance on his first position of belief which needed sight as its basis.

But he had not yet come to the full belief of, and reliance upon, that Healer recognised as Messiah. But the experience which he now has had, though it be an experience based upon miracle, is the parent of a faith which is not merely the child of wonder, nor the result of beholding an outward sign. And so we read:—'So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth. And himself believed and his whole house.'

A partial faith brings experience which confirms and enlarges faith; and they who dimly apprehend Him, and yet humbly love Him, and imperfectly trust Him, will receive into their bosoms such large gifts of His love and gracious Spirit that their faith will be strengthened, and they will grow into the full stature of peaceful confidence.

The way to increase faith is to exercise faith. And the true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest, blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise. Trust Him as you can, do not be afraid of inadequate conceptions, or of a feeble grasp. Trust Him as you can, and He will give you so much more than you expected that you will trust Him more, and be able to say: 'Now I believe, because I have heard Him myself, and know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE THIRD MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.'—JOHN v.8

This third of the miracles recorded in John's Gospel finds a place there, as it would appear, for two reasons: first, because it marks the beginning of the angry unbelief on the part of the Jewish rulers, the development of which it is one part of the purpose of this Gospel to trace; second, because it is the occasion for that great utterance of our Lord about His Sonship and His divine working as the Father also works, which occupies the whole of the rest of the chapter, and is the foundation of much which follows in the Gospel. It is for these reasons, and not for the mere sake of adding another story of a miraculous cure to the many which the other Evangelists have given us, that John narrates for us this history.

If, then, we consider the reason for the introduction of the miracle into the Gospel, we may be saved from the necessity of dwelling, except very lightly, upon some of the preliminary details which preceded the actual cure. It does not matter much to us for our present purpose which Feast it was on which Jesus went up to Jerusalem, nor whether the pool was by the sheep-market or by the sheep-gate, nor whereabouts in Jerusalem Bethesda might happen to be. It may be of importance for us to notice that the mention of the angel who appears in the fourth verse is not a part of the original narrative. The true text only tells us of an intermittent pool which possessed, or was supposed to possess, curative energy; and round which the kindness of some forgotten benefactor had built five rude porches. There lay a crowd of wasted forms, and pale, sorrowful faces, with all varieties of pain and emaciation and impotence marked upon them, who yet were gathered in Bethesda, which being interpreted means 'a house of mercy.' It is the type of a world full of men suffering various sicknesses, but all sick; the type of a world that gathers with an eagerness, not far removed from despair, round anything that seems to promise, however vaguely, to help and to heal; the type of a world, blessed be God, which, amidst all its sad variety of woe and weariness, yet sits in the porches of 'a house of mercy,' and has in the midst a 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' whose energy is as mighty for the last comer of all the generations as for the first that stepped into its cleansing flood.

This poor man, sick and impotent for eight and thirty years—many of which he had spent, as it would appear, day by day, wearily dragging his paralysed limbs to the fountain with daily diminishing hope—this poor man attracts the regard of Christ when He enters, and He puts to him the strange question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Surely there was no need to ask that; but no doubt the many disappointments and the long years of waiting and of suffering had stamped apathy upon the sufferer's face, and Christ saw that the first thing that was needed, in order that His healing power might have a point of contact in the man's nature, was to kindle some little flicker of hope in him once more.

And so, no doubt, with a smile on His face, which converted the question into an offer, He says: 'Wilt thou be made whole?' meaning thereby to say, 'I will heal thee if thou wilt.' And

there comes the weary answer, as if the man had said: 'Will I be made whole? What have I been lying here all these years for? I have nobody to put me into the pool.'

Yes, it is a hopeful prospect to hold out to a man whose disease is inability to walk, that if he will walk to the water he will get cured, and be able to walk afterwards. Why, he could not even roll himself into the pond, and so there he had lain, a type of the hopeless efforts at self-healing which we sick men put forth, a type of the tantalising gospels which the world preaches to its subjects when it says to a paralysed man: 'Walk that you may be healed; keep the commandments that you may enter into life.'

And so we have come at last to the main point of the narrative before us, and I fix upon these words, the actual words in which the cure was conveyed, as communicating to us some very important lessons and thoughts about Christ and our relation to Him.

I. First, I see in them Christ manifesting Himself as the Giver of power to the powerless who trust Him.

His words may seem at first hearing to partake of the very same almost cruel irony as the condition of cure which had already proved hopelessly impracticable. He, too, says, 'Walk that you may be cured'; and He says it to a paralysed and impotent man. But the two things are very different, for before this cripple could attempt to drag his impotent limbs into an upright position, and take up the little light couch and sling it over his shoulders, he must have had some kind of trust in the person that told him to do so. A very ignorant trust, no doubt, it was; but all that was set before him about Jesus Christ he grasped and rested upon. He only knew Him as a Healer, and he trusted Him as such. The contents of a man's faith have nothing to do with the reality of his faith; and he that, having only had the healing power of Christ revealed to him, lays hold of that Healer, cleaves to Him with as genuine a faith as the man who has the whole fulness and sublimity of Christ's divine and human character and redeeming work laid out before him, and who cleaves to these. The hand that grasps is one, whatsoever be the thing that it grasps.

So it is no spiritualising of this story, or reading into it a deeper and more religious meaning than belongs to it, to say that what passed in that man's heart and mind before he caught up his little bed and walked away with it, was essentially the same action of mind and heart by which a sinful man, who knows that Christ is his Redeemer, grasps His Cross and trusts his soul to Him. In the one case, as in the other, there is confidence in the person; only in the one case the person was only known as a Healer, and in the other the person is known as a Saviour. But the faith is the same whatever it apprehends.

Christ comes and says to him, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk.' There is a movement of confidence in the man's heart; he tries to obey, and in the act of obedience the power comes to him.

Ah, brother! it is always so. All Christ's commandments are gifts. When He says to you, 'Do this!' He pledges Himself to give you power to do it. Whatsoever He enjoins He strengthens for. He binds Himself, by His commandments, and every word of His lips which says to us 'Thou shalt!' contains as its kernel a word of His which says 'I will.' So when He commands, He bestows; and we get the power to keep His commandments when in humble faith we make the effort to do His will. It is only when we try to obey for the love's sake of Him that has healed us that we are able to obey. And be sure of this, whensoever we

attempt to do what we know to be the Master's will, because He has given Himself for us, our power will be equal to our desire, and enough for our duty. As St. Augustine says: 'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.'

'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' or as in another case, 'Stretch forth thy hand.' 'And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored whole as the other.' Christ gives power to keep His commandments to the impotent who try to obey, because they have been healed by Him.

II. In the next place, we have in this miracle our Lord set forth as the absolute Master, because He is the Healer.

The Pharisees and their friends had no eyes for the miracle; but if they found a man carrying his light couch on the Sabbath day, that was a thing that excited their interest, and must be seen to immediately.

And so, paying no attention to the fact that it was a paralysed man who was doing this, with the true narrow instinct of the formalist, they lay hold only of the fact of the broken Rabbinical restrictions, and try to stop him with these. 'It is the Sabbath day! It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.'

And they get an answer which goes a great deal deeper than the speaker knew, and puts the whole subject of Christian obedience on its right footing. 'He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.' As if he had said: 'He gave me the power, had He not a right to tell me what to do with it? It was His gift that I could lift my bed; was I not bound to walk when and where He that had made me able to walk at all chose to bid me?'

And if you generalise that it just comes to this: the only person that has a right to command you is the Christ who saves you. He has the absolute authority to do as He will with your restored spiritual powers, because He has bestowed them all upon you. His dominion is built upon His benefits. He is the King because He is the Saviour. He rules because He has redeemed. He begins with giving, and it is only afterwards that He commands; and He turns to each of us with that smile upon His lips, and with tenderness in His voice which will bind any man, who is not an ingrate, to Him for ever. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'

There is always something hard and distasteful to the individual will in the tone of authority assumed by any man whatsoever. We always more or less rebel and shrink from that; and there is only one thing that makes commandment sweet, and that is when it drops like honey from the honeycomb, from lips that we love. So does it in the case of Christ's commands to us. It is joy to know and to do the will of One to whom the whole heart turns with gratitude and affection. And Christ blesses and privileges us by the communication to us of His pleasure concerning us, that we may have the gladness of yielding to His desires, and so meeting the love which commands with the happy love which obeys. 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me…' and what He says it must be joy to do.

So, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light,' not because Christ diminishes the requirements of law; not because the standard of Christian obedience is lowered beneath any other standard of conduct and character. It is far higher. The things which make Christian duty are often very painful in themselves. There is always self-sacrifice in

Christian virtue, and self-sacrifice has always a sting in it; but the 'yoke is easy and the burden is light,' because, if I may so say, the yoke is padded with the softest velvet of love, and lies upon our necks lightly because He has laid it there. All the rigid harshness of precept is done away when the precept comes from Christ's lips, and His commandment 'makes the crooked things straight and the rough places plain'; and turns duty, distasteful duty, into joyful service. The blessed basis of Christian obedience, and of Christ's authority, is Christ's redemption.

III. And then, still further, we have here our Lord setting Himself forth as the divine Son, whose working needs and knows no rest.

We find, in the subsequent part of the chapter, that 'the Jews,' as they are called, by which is meant the antagonistic portion of the nation, sought to slay Christ 'because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.' But Jesus answered them, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Unquestionably the form which the healing took was intended by our Lord to bring into prominence the very point which these pedantic casuists laid hold of. He meant to draw attention to His sweeping aside of the Rabbinical casuistries of the law of the Sabbath. And He meant to do it in order that He might have the occasion of making this mighty claim, which is lodged in these solemn and profound words, to possess a Sonship, which, like the divine working, wrought, needing and knowing no repose.

'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' The rest, which the old story in Genesis attributed to the Creator after the Creation, was not to be construed as if it meant the rest of inactivity; but it was the rest of continuous action. God's rest and God's work are one. Throughout all the ages preservation is a continuous creation. The divine energy is streaming out for evermore, as the bush that burns unconsumed, as the sun that flames undiminished for ever, pouring out from the depth of that divine nature, and for ever sustaining a universe. So that there is no Sabbath, in the sense of a cessation from action, proper to the divine nature; because all His action is repose, and 'e'en in His very motion there is rest.' And this divine coincidence of activity and of repose belongs to the divine Son in His divine-human nature. With that arrogance which is the very audacity of blasphemy, if it be not the simplicity of a divine consciousness, He puts His own work side by side with the Father's work, as the same in principle, the same in method, the same in purpose, the same in its majestic coincidence of repose and of energy.

'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore for Me, as for Him, there is no need of a Sabbath of repose.' Human activity is dissipated by toil, human energy is exhausted by expenditure. Man works and is weary; man works and is distracted. For the recovery of the serenity of his spirit, and for the renewal of his physical strength, repose of body and gathering in of mind, such as the Sabbath brought, were needed; but neither is needed for Him who toils unwearied in the heavens; and neither is needed for the divine nature of Him who labours in labours parallel with the Father's here upon the earth.

Now remember that this is no abolition of the Sabbatic rest for Christ's followers. Rather the ground on which He here asserts His superiority over, and His non-dependence upon, such a repose shows, or at all events implies, that all mere human workers need such rest, and should thankfully accept it. But it is a claim on His part to a divine equality. It is a claim

on His part to do works which are other than human works. It is a claim on His part to be the Lord of a divine institution, living above the need of it, and able to mould it at His will.

And so it opens up depths, into which we cannot go now, of the relations of that divine Father and that divine Son; and makes us feel that the little incident in which He turned to a paralysed man and said: 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' on the Sabbath day, like some small floating leaf of sea-weed upon the surface, has great deep tendrils that go down and down into the very abyss of things, and lays hold upon that central truth of Christianity, the divinity of the Son of God, who is One with the ever-working Father.

IV. Lastly, we have in this incident yet another lesson. We have the Healer who is also the Judge, warning the healed of the possibilities of a relapse.

'Jesus findeth him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' The man's eight-and-thirty years of illness had apparently been brought on by dissipation. It was a sin of flesh, avenged in the flesh, that had given him that miserable life. One would have thought he had got warning enough, but we all know the old proverb about what happened when the devil was ill, and what befell his resolutions when he got better. And so Christ comes to him again with this solemn warning: 'There is a worse thing than eight-and-thirty years of paralysis. You fell once, and sore was your punishment. If you fall twice, your punishment will be sorer.' Why? Because the first one had done him no good. So here are lessons for us. There is always danger that we shall fall back into old sins, even if we think we have overcome them. The mystic influence of habit, enfeebled will, the familiar temptation, the imagination rebelling, the memory tempting, sometimes even, as in the case of a man that has been a drunkard, the physical effect of the odour of his temptation upon his nostrils—all these things make it extremely unlikely that a man who has once been under the condemnation of any evil shall never be tempted to fall under its sway again.

And such a fall is not only more criminal than the former, it is more deadly than the former. 'It were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn aside.' 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.'

My brother, there is no blacker condemnation; and if I may use a strong word, there is no hotter hell, than that which belongs to an apostate Christian. 'It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his vomit again.' Very unpolite, a very coarse metaphor? Yes; to express a far worse reality.

Christian men and women! you have been made whole. 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.' And turn to that Lord and say, 'Hold Thou me up and I shall be saved.' Then the enemies will not be able to recapture you, and the chains which have dropped from your wrists will never enclose them any more.

THE LIFE-GIVER AND JUDGE

'But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. 22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; 27. And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.'—JOHN v. 17-27.

'The Jews' were up in arms because Jesus had delivered a man from thirty-eight years of misery. They had no human sympathies for the sufferer, whom hope deferred had made sick and hopeless, but they shuddered at the breach of the Sabbath. 'Sacrifice' was more important in their view than 'mercy.' They did not acknowledge that the miracle proved Christ's Messiahship, but they were quite sure that doing it on the Sabbath proved His wickedness. How formalism twists men's judgments of the relative magnitude of form and spirit!

Jesus' vindication of His action roused them still farther, for He put it on a ground which seemed to them nothing short of blasphemy: 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' They fastened on one point in that great saying, namely, that it claimed Sonship in a special sense, and vindicated His right to disregard the Sabbath law on that ground. God's rest is not inaction. 'Preservation is a continual creation.' All being subsists because God is ever working. The Son co-operates with the Father, and for Him, as for the Father, the Sabbath law does not apply. The charge of breaking the Sabbath fades into insignificance before the sin, in the objectors' eyes, of making such claims. Therefore our Lord proceeds to expand and justify them.

He makes, first, a general statement in verses 19 and 20, in which He sets forth the relation involved in the very idea of Fatherhood and Sonship. He, as perfect Son of God, is perfectly one with the Father in will and act, and so knit to Him in sympathy that a self-originated action is impossible, not by reason of defect of power, but by reason of unity of being. That perfect unity is expressed negatively ('can do nothing') and then positively ('doeth likewise'). But it is not manifest in actions alone, but has its deep roots in the

perfect love which flows ever from each to each, and in the Father's perfect communication to the Son, and the Son's perfect reception from the Father. Jesus claimed to stand in such a relation to the Father that He was able to do whatsoever the Father did, and 'in like manner' as the Father did it; that He was the unique object of the Father's love, and capable of receiving complete communications as to 'all things that Himself doeth'; that He lived in such complete unity with the Father that His every act was the result of it, and that no trace of self-will had ever tinged His perfect spirit. What man has ever made such claims and not been treated as insane? He makes them, and likewise says that He is 'lowly of heart'; and the world listens, if not believing, at any rate reverent, as in the presence of the best man that ever lived. Strange goodness, to claim such divine prerogatives, unless the claim is valid!

It is expanded in verses 21-23 into two great classes of works, which Jesus says that He does. Both are distinctively divine works. To give life and to judge the world are equally beyond human power; they are equally His actions. These are the 'greater works' which He foretells in verse 20, and they are greater than the miracle of healing which had originated the whole conversation. To give life at first, and to give it again to the dead, and not only to revivify, but to raise them, are plainly competent to no power short of the divine; and here Jesus calmly claims them.

That tremendous claim is here made in the widest sense, including both the corporeally and the spiritually dead, who are afterwards treated of separately. The Son is the fountain of life in all the aspects of that wide-reaching word; and He 'quickeneth whom He will,' as He had spontaneously healed the impotent man. Does that assertion contradict the other, just before it, that He does nothing of Himself? No; for His will, while His, is ever harmonious with the Father's, just as His love, which is ever coincident with the Father's. Does that assertion imply His arbitrary pleasure, or make man's will a cipher? No; for His will is guided by righteous love, and wills to quicken those who comply with His conditions. But the assertion does declare that His will to quicken is omnipotent, and that His voice can pierce 'the dull, cold ear of death,' and bring back the soul to the empty house of this tabernacle, or rouse the spirit 'dead in trespasses.'

The other divine prerogative of judging is inseparable from that of revivifying, and in regard to it Christ's claim is still higher, for He says that it is wholly vested in Him as Son. The idea of judgment here, like that of quickening, with which it is associated, is to be taken in its more general sense ('*all* judgment'), and therefore as including both the present judgment, for which Jesus said that He was come into the world, and which men pass on themselves by the very fact of their attitude to Him and His Gospel, and also the future final judgment, which manifests character and determines destiny. Both these has the Father given into the hands of the Son.

The purpose, so far as men are concerned, of the Son's investiture, with these solemn prerogatives, is that He may receive universal divine honour. A narrower purpose was stated in verse 20, where the persons seeing His works are only His then audience, and the effect sought to be produced is merely 'marvel.' But wonder is meant to lead on to recognition of the meaning of His power, and of the mystery of His person, and that, again, to rendering to Him precisely the same honour as is due to the Father. No more unmistakable demand for worship, no more emphatic assertion of divinity, can be made

than lie in these words. To worship Christ does not intercept the honour due to God; to worship the Son is to worship the Father; and no man honours the Father who sent Him who does not honour the Son whom He has sent.

In verses 24-27 the two related prerogatives are presented in their spiritual aspect, while in the later verses of the chapter the resurrection and quickening of the literally dead are dealt with. Mark the significant new term introduced in verse 24, 'He that believeth.' That spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and self is wrought on 'whom He will,' but He wills that it shall be wrought on them who believe. Similarly, in verse 25, it is 'they that hear' who 'shall live.' It must be so, for there is no other way by which life from Him, who is the Life, can pass into and quicken us than by our opening our hearts by faith for its inflow. The mysteries of the Son's divinity and of His imparted life are deep, but the condition of receiving that life is plain. If we will trust Jesus, we shall live; if not, we are dead. Trusting Him is trusting the Father that sent Him, and that Father becomes accessible to our trust when we 'hear' Christ's 'word.'

The effects of faith are immediate, and the poor present may be enriched and clothed in celestial light for each of us, if we will. For Jesus does not point first to the mysteries of the resurrection of the dead, and the tremendous solemnities of the final judgment, but to what we may each enter upon at any moment. The believing man '*hath* eternal life,' and 'cometh not into judgment.' That life is not reserved to be entered on in the blessed future, but is a present possession. True, it will blossom into unexampled nobleness when it is transported into its native country, like some exotic in our colder climates if it were carried back to the tropics. But it is a present possession, and heaven is not different in kind from the Christian life on earth, but differs mainly in degree and in circumstances. And he that has the life here and now is, by its moulding of his outward life, preserved from the sins which would bring him into judgment, and the merciful judgment to which he is still subject is that for which his truest self longs. And that blessed condition carries in it the pledge that, at the last great day, which is to others a 'day of wrath, a dreadful day,' he whom Christ has quickened by His own indwelling life shall have 'boldness before Him.'

Obviously, in these verses the present effects of faith are in view, since Jesus emphatically declares that the 'hour now is' when they can be realised. Once more He states in the strongest terms, and as the reason for the assurance that faith secures to us life, His possession of the two divine prerogatives of quickening and judging. What a paradox it is to say that it is '*given*' to Him to have 'life in *Himself*'! And when was that gift given? In the depths of eternity.

He 'sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be,' and hence He can impart life and lose none. Inseparably connected with that given, and yet self-inherent, life, is the capacity for executing judgment which belongs to Him as 'a Son of man.' It has been as 'the Son' of the Father that it has been considered, in the previous verses, as belonging to Him; but now it is as a true man that He is fitted to bear, and actually is clothed with, that judicial power. No doubt He is Judge of all, because by His incarnation and earthly life He presents to all the offer of eternal life, by their attitude to which offer men are judged. But the connection of thought seems rather to be that Christ's Manhood, inextricably intertwined with His divinity, is equally needed with the latter to constitute Him our Judge. He 'knoweth

our frame,' from the inside, as it were, and the participation in our nature which fits Him to 'be a merciful and faithful High Priest' also fits Him to be the Judge of mankind.

THE FOURTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.'—JOHN vi. 11.

This narrative of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand is introduced into John's Gospel with singular abruptness. We read in the first verse of the chapter: 'After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee,' *i.e.* from the western to the eastern side. But the Evangelist does not tell us how or when He got to the western side. 'These things,' which are recorded in the previous chapter, are the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, the consequent outburst of Jewish hostility, and the profound and solemn discourse of our Lord, in which He claims filial relationship to the Father. So that we must insert between the chapters a journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, and a lapse at all events of some months—or, if the feast referred to in the previous chapter be, as it may be, the Passover, an interval of nearly a year. So little care for the mere framework of events has this fourth Gospel; so entirely would the Evangelist have us see that his reason for narrating this miracle is mainly its spiritual lessons and the revelation which it makes of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

Similarly, he has no care to tell us anything about the reasons for our Lord's retirement with His disciples from Galilee to the eastern bank. These we have to learn from the other Evangelists. They give us several concurrent motives—the news of the death of John the Baptist; and of the desire of the bloody tyrant to see Jesus, which foreboded evil; also the return of the twelve Apostles from their trial journey, which involved the necessity of rest for them; and, perhaps, the approach of the Passover, which our Lord did not purpose to observe in Jerusalem because of the Jewish hostility, and which, therefore, suggested the withdrawal to temporary retirement.

All these reasons concurring, He and His disciples would seek for a brief space of seclusion and repose. But the hope of securing such was vain. The people followed in crowds so eagerly, so hastily, in such enormous numbers, that no natural or ordinary provision for their wants could be thought of. Hence the occasion for the miracle before us.

Now I think that this narrative, with which I wish to deal, falls mainly into two portions, both of which suggest for us some important lessons. There is, first, the preparations for the sign; and then there is the sign itself. Let us look at these two points in succession.

I. First, then, the preparations for the sign.

Now it is to be observed that this is the only incident before our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem which is recorded by all four Evangelists; therefore the variations between the narratives are of especial interest, and these variations are very considerable. We find, for instance, that in John's account the question as to how the bread was to be provided came from Christ; in the other Evangelists' accounts that question is discussed first amongst the Apostles privately. We find from John's narrative that the question was suggested even

before the multitudes had come to Jesus. We find in the Synoptic Gospels that it arose at the close of a long day of teaching and of healing.

Now it is possible that this diversity of time may be the solution of the diversity of the person proposing. That is to say, it is quite legitimate to conclude that John's account takes up the incident at an earlier period than the other Evangelists do, and that the full order of events was this; that, privately, at the beginning of the day, whilst the people were yet flocking to our Lord, He, to one of the disciples alone, suggests the question, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' and that the answer, 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one of them may take a little,' explains for us the suggestion of the same amount at a subsequent part of the day, by the Apostles when they asked our Lord the question, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread that these may eat?'

Be that as it may, we may pause for a moment upon this question of our Lord's, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?'

Now notice what a lovely glimpse we get there into the quick-rising sympathy of the Saviour with all forms of human necessity. He had gone away to snatch a brief moment of rest. The rest is denied Him; the hurrying crowds come pressing with their vulgar curiosity—for it was nothing better—after Him. No movement of impatience passes across His mind; no reluctance as He turns away from the vanishing prospect of a quiet afternoon with His friends. He looks upon them, and the first thought is a quick, instinctive movement of a divine and yet most human sympathy. The question rises in His mind of how He was to provide for them; they were not hungry yet; they had not thought where their bread was to come from. But He cared for the careless, and His heart was prophetic of their necessities, and quick to determine 'what He should do' to supply them. So is it ever. Before we call, He answers. Thy mercy, O loving Christ! needs no more than the sight of human necessities, or even the anticipation of them, swiftly to bestir itself for their satisfaction and their supply.

But, farther, He selects for the question Philip, a man who seems to have been what is called—as if it were the highest praise—an 'intensely practical person'; who seems to have had little faith in anything that he could not get hold of by his senses, and who lived upon the low level of 'common sense.' He always lays stress upon 'seeing.' His answer to Nathanael when he said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was, 'Come and see.' A very good answer, and yet one that relies only on the external manifestation of Christ to the senses. Then, on another occasion, he breaks in upon the lofty spiritualities of our Lord's final discourse to His disciples, with the *malapropos* request, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' And so here, to the man who believed in his eyesight, and did not easily apprehend much else, Jesus puts this question, 'Where is the bread to come from for all these people? This He said to prove him.' He hoped that the question might have shaped itself in the hearer's mind into a promise, and that he might have been able to say in answer, 'Thou canst supply; we need not buy.'

So Christ does still. He puts problems before us, too, to settle; takes us, as it were, into His confidence with interrogations that try us, whether we can rise above the level of the material and visible, or whether all our conceptions of possibilities are bounded by these. And sometimes, even though the question at first sight seems to evoke only such a

response as it did here, it works more deeply down below afterwards, and we are helped by the very difficulty to rise to a clear faith.

Philip's answer is very significant. 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread are not sufficient.' He casts his eye over the multitude, he makes a rough, rapid calculation, one does not exactly see the data on which it was based; and he comes to the conclusion, 'Two hundred pennyworth' (in our English money some L. 7 or L. 8 worth) would give them each a morsel. And no doubt he thought himself very practical. He was a man of figures; he believed in what could be put into tables and statistics. Yes; and like a great many other people of his sort, he left out one small element in his calculation, and that was Jesus Christ, and so his answer went creeping along the low levels, dragging itself like a half-wounded snake, when it might have risen on the wings of faith into the empyrean, and soared and sung.

So learn that when we have to deal with Christ's working—and when have we not to deal with Christ's working?—perhaps probabilities that can be tabulated are not altogether the best bases upon which to rest our calculations. Learn that the audacity of a faith that expects great things, though there be nothing visible upon which to build, is wiser and more prudent than the creeping common-sense that adheres to facts which are shadows, and forgets that the chief fact is that we have an Almighty Helper and Friend at our sides.

Still further, among these preliminaries, let us point to the exhibition of the inadequate resources which Christ, according to the fuller narrative in the other Evangelists, desired to know. 'There is a little lad here with five barley loaves'—one per thousand—'and two small fishes'—insufficient in quantity and very, very common in quality, for barley bread was the food of the poorest. 'But what are they among so many?' And Christ says, 'Bring them to Me.'

Christ's preparation for making our poor resources adequate for anything is to drive home into our hearts the consciousness of their insufficiency. We need, first of all, to be brought to this, 'All that I have is this wretched little stock; and what is that measured against the work that I have to do, and the claims upon me?' Only when we are brought to that can His great power pour itself into us and fill us with rejoicing and overcoming strength. The old mystics used to say, and they said truly: 'You must be emptied of yourself before you can be filled by God.' And the first thing for any man to learn, in preparation for receiving a mightier power than his own into his opening heart, is to know that all his own strength is utter and absolute weakness. 'What are they among so many?' When we have once gone right down into the depths of felt impotence, and when our work has risen before us, as if it were far too great for our poor strengths which are weaknesses, then we are brought, and only then, into the position in which we may begin to hope that power equal to our desire will be poured into our souls.

And so the last of the preparations that I will touch upon is that majestic preparation for blessing by obedience. 'And Jesus said, Make the men sit down.' And there they sat themselves, as Mark puts it in his picturesque way, like so many garden plots—the rectangular oblongs in a garden in which pot-herbs are grown—on the green grass, below the blue sky, by the side of the quiet lake. Cannot you fancy how some of them seated themselves with a scoff, and some with a quiet smile of incredulity; and some half

sheepishly and reluctantly; and some in mute expectancy; and some in foolish wonder; and yet all of them with a partial obedience? And says John in the true translation: 'So the men sat down, therefore Jesus took the loaves.' Sit you down where He bids you, and your mouths will not be long empty. Do the things He tells you, and you will get the food that you need. Our business is to obey and to wait, and His business is, when we are seated, to open His hand and let the mercy drop. So much for the preparations for this great miracle.

II. Now, in the next place, a word as to the sign itself.

I take two lessons, and two only, out of it. I see in it, first, a revelation of Christ, as continually through all the ages sustaining men's physical life. And I see in it, second, a symbol of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

As to the first, there is here, I believe, a revelation of the law of the universe, of Christ as being through all the ages the Sustainer of the physical life of men. What was done then once, with the suppression of certain links in the chain, is done always, with the introduction of those links. The miraculous moment in the narrative is not described to us. We do not know where or when there came in the supernatural power which multiplied the loaves—probably as they passed from the hand of the Master. But be that as it may, it was Christ's will that made the provision which fed all these five thousand. And I believe that the teaching of Scripture is in accordance with the deepest philosophy, that the one cause of all physical phenomena is the will of a present God; howsoever that may usually conform to the ordinary method of working which people generalise and call laws. The reason why anything is, and the reason why all things change, is the energy there and then of the indwelling God who is in all His works, and who is the only Will and Power in the physical world.

And I believe, further, that Scripture teaches us that that continuous will, which is the cause of all phenomena and the underlying subsistence on which all things repose, is all managed and mediated by Him who from of old was named the Word; 'in whom was life, and without whom was not anything made that was made.' Our Christ is Creator, our Christ is Sustainer, our Christ moves the stars and feeds the sparrows. He was 'before all things, and in Him all things consist.' He opens His hand—and there is the print of a nail in it—and 'satisfies the desire of every living thing.'

So learn how to think of second causes, and see in this story a transient manifestation, in unusual form, of an eternal and permanent fact. Jesus took the loaves and distributed to them that were set down.

And so, secondly, the miracle is a *sign*—a symbol of Him as the true Bread and Food of the world. That is the explanation and commentary which He Himself appends to it in the subsequent part of the chapter, in the great discourse which is founded upon this miracle.

'I am the Bread of Life.' There is a triple statement by our Lord upon this subject in the remaining portion of the chapter. He says, 'I am the Bread of Life.' My personality is that which not only sustains life when it is given, but gives life to them that feed upon it. But more than that, 'the bread which I will give,' pointing to some future 'giving' beyond the present moment, and therefore something more than His life and example, 'is My flesh, which'—in some as yet unexplained way—'I give for the life of the world.' And that there may be no misunderstanding, there is a third, deeper, more mysterious statement still: 'My

flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' Repulsive and paradoxical, but in its very offensiveness and paradox, proclaiming that it covers a mighty truth, and the truth, brother, is this, the one Food that gives life to will, affections, conscience, understanding, to the whole spirit of a man, is that great Sacrifice of the Incarnate Lord who gave upon the Cross His flesh, and on the Cross shed His blood, for the life of the world that was 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we feed on the sacrifice. Let your conscience, your heart, your desires, your anticipations, your understanding, your will, your whole being feed on Him. He will be cleansing, He will be love, He will be fruition, He will be hope, He will be truth, He will be righteousness, He will be all. Feed upon Him by that faith which is the true eating of the true Bread, and your souls shall live.

And notice finally here, the result of this miracle as transferred to the region of symbol. 'They did all eat and were filled'; men, women, children, both sexes, all ages, all classes, found the food that they needed in the bread that came from Christ's hands. If any man wants dainties that will tickle the palates of Epicureans, let him go somewhere else. But if he wants bread, to keep the life in and to stay his hunger, let him go to this Christ who is 'human nature's daily food.'

The world has scoffed for nineteen centuries at the barley bread that the Gospel provides; coarse by the side of its confectionery, but it is enough to give life to all who eat it. It goes straight to the primal necessities of human nature. It does not coddle a class, or pander to unwholesome, diseased, or fastidious appetites. It is the food of the world, and not of a section. All men can relish it, all men need it. It is offered to them all.

And more than that; notice the inexhaustible abundance. 'They did all eat, and were filled.' And then they took up—not 'of the fragments,' as our Bible gives it, conveying the idea of the crumbs that littered the grass after the repast was over, but of the 'broken pieces'—the portions that came from Christ's hands—twelve baskets full, an immensely greater quantity than they had to start with. 'The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received.' Other goods and other possessions perish with the using, but this increases with use. The more one eats, the more there is for him to eat. And all the world may live upon it for ever, and there will be more at the end than there was at the beginning.

Brethren, why do ye 'spend your money for that which is not bread'? There is no answer worthy of a rational soul, no answer that will stand either the light of conscience or the clearer light of the Day of Judgment. I come to you now, and although my poor words may be but like the barley bread and the two fishes—nothing amongst all this gathered audience—I come with Christ in my hands, and I say to you, 'Eat, and your souls shall live.' He will spread a table for you in the wilderness, and take you to sit at last at His table in His Kingdom.

'FRAGMENTS' OR 'BROKEN PIECES'

'When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.'—JOHN vi. 12.

The Revised Version correctly makes a very slight, but a very significant change in the words of this verse. Instead of 'fragments' it reads 'broken pieces.' The change seems very small, but the effect of it is considerable. It helps our picture of the scene by correcting a very common misapprehension as to what it was which the Apostles are bid to gather up. The general notion, I suppose, is that the 'fragments' are the crumbs that fell from each man's hands, as he ate, and the picture before the imagination of the ordinary reader is that of the Apostles' carefully collecting the *debris* of the meal from the grass where it had dropped. But the true notion is that the 'broken pieces which remain over' are the unused portions into which our Lord's miracle-working hand had broken the bread, and the true picture is that of the Apostles carefully putting away in store for future use the abundant provision which their Lord had made, beyond the needs of the hungry thousands. And that conception of the command teaches far more beautiful and deeper lessons than the other.

For if the common translation and notion be correct, all that is taught us, or at least what is principally taught us, is the duty of thrift and careful economy; whereas the other shows more clearly that what is taught us is that Jesus Christ always gets ready for His people something over and above the exact limits of their bare need at the moment, that He prepares for His poor and hungry dependants in royal fashion, leaving ever a wide margin of difference between what would be just enough to keep the life in them, and His liberal housekeeping. Further, we are taught a lesson of wise husbandry and economy in the use of that overplus of grace which Christ ministers, and are instructed that the laws of prudent thrift have as honoured a place in the management of spiritual as of temporal wealth. 'Gather up,' says our Lord, 'the pieces which I broke, the large provision which I made for possible wants. My gifts are in excess of the requirements of the moment. Take care of them till you need them.' That is a worthier interpretation of His command than one which merely sees in it an exhortation to thrifty taking care of the crumbs that fell from the lips of the hungry eaters.

Looking at this command, then, with this slight alteration of rendering, and consequent widening of scope, we may briefly try to gather up the lessons which it obviously suggests.

I. We have that thought, to which I have already referred, as more strikingly brought out by the slight alteration of translation, which, by the use of '*broken* pieces,' suggests the connection with Christ's *breaking* the loaves and fishes. We are taught to think of the large surplus in Christ's gifts over and above our need. Our Lord has Himself given us a commentary upon this miracle. All Christ's miracles are parables, for all teach us, on the level of natural and outward things, lessons that are true in regard to the spiritual world; but this one is especially symbolical, as indeed are all these recorded in John's Gospel. And here we have Christ, on the day after the miracle, commenting upon it in His long and

profound discourse upon the Bread of Life, which plainly intimates that He meant His office of feeding the hungry crowds, with bread supernaturally increased by the touch of His hand, to be but a picture and a guide which might lead to the apprehension of the higher view of Himself as the 'bread of God which came down from heaven,' feeding and 'giving life to the world' by His broken body and shed blood.

So that we are not inventing a fanciful interpretation of an incident not meant to have any meaning deeper than shows on the surface, when we say that the abundance far beyond what the eaters could make use of at the moment really represented the large surplus of inexhaustible resources and unused grace which is treasured for us all in Christ Jesus. Whom He feeds He feasts. His gifts answer our need, and over-answer it, for He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above that which we ask or think,' and neither our conceptions, nor our petitions, nor our present powers of receiving, are the real limits of the illimitable grace that is laid up for us in Christ, and which, potentially, we have each of us in our hands whenever we lay our hands on Him.

Oh, dear friends! what you and I have ever had and felt of Christ's power, sweetness, preciousness, and love is as nothing compared with the infinite depths of all those which lie in Him. The sea fills the little creeks along its shore, but it rolls in unfathomed depths, boundless to the horizon away out there in the mid-Atlantic. And all the present experience of all Christian people, of what Christ is, is like the experience of the first settlers in some great undiscovered continent; who timidly plant a little fringe of population round its edge and grow their scanty crops there, whilst the great prairies of miles and miles, with all their wealth and fertility, are lying untrodden and unknown in the heart of the untraversed continent. The most powerful telescope leaves nebulae unresolved, which, though they seem but a dim dust of light, are all ablaze with mighty suns. The 'goodness' which He has 'wrought before the sons of men for them that fear' Him is, as the Psalmist adoringly exclaims, wondrously 'great,' but still greater is that which the same verse of the Psalm celebrates—the goodness which He has 'laid up for them that fear Him.' The gold which is actually coined and passing from hand to hand, is but a fraction, a mere scale, as it were, off the surface of the great uncoined mass of bullion that lies stored in the vaults there. Christ is a great deal more than any man, or than all men, have yet found Him to be. 'Gather up the broken pieces'; and see that nothing of that infinite preciousness of His be lost by us.

II. Then there is another very simple lesson which I draw. This command suggests for us Christ's thrift (if I may use the word) in the employment of His miraculous power.

Surely they might have said: 'If thou canst multiply five loaves into all this abundance, why should we be trudging about, each with a basket on his back full of bread, when we have with us He whose word can make it for us at any moment?' Yes, but a law which characterises all the miraculous, in both the Old and the New Testament, and which broadly distinguishes Christ's miracles from all the false miracles of false religions is this, that the miraculous is pared down to the smallest possible amount, that not one hairsbreadth beyond the necessity shall be done by miracle; that whatever men can do they shall do; that their work shall stop as late, and begin again as soon as possible. Thus, though Christ was going to raise Lazarus, men's hands had to roll away the stone; and when Christ had raised Lazarus, men's hands had to loose the napkins from his face. And though Christ was able to say to the daughter of Jairus, '*Talitha cumi!*' (damsel, arise!) His next word was:

'Give her something to eat.' Where the miraculous was needed it was used, and not a hairsbreadth beyond absolute necessity did it extend.

And so here Christ multiplies the bread, and yet each of the Apostles has to take a basket, probably some kind of woven wicker-work article which they would carry for holding their little necessaries in their peregrinations; each Apostle has to take his basket, and perhaps emptying it of some of his humble apparel, to fill it with these bits of bread; for Christ was not going to work miracles where men's thrift and prudence could be employed.

Nor does He do so now. We live by faith, and our dependence on Him can never be too absolute. Only laziness sometimes dresses itself in the garb and speaks with the tongue of faith, and pretends to be truthful when it is only slothful. 'Why criest thou unto Me?' said God to Moses, 'speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.' True faith sets us to work. It is not to be perverted into idle and false depending upon Him to work for us, when by the use of our own ten fingers and our own brains, guided and strengthened by His working in us, we can do the work that is set before us.

III. Still further, there is another lesson here. Not only does the injunction show us Christ's thrift in the employment of the supernatural, but it teaches us our duty of thrift and care in the use of the spiritual grace bestowed upon us.

These men had given to them this miraculously made bread; but they had to exercise ordinary thrift in the preservation of the supernatural gift. Christ has been given to you by the most stupendous miracle that ever was or can be wrought, and if you are Christian people, you have the Spirit of Christ given to you, to dwell in your hearts, to make you wise and fair, gentle and strong, and altogether Christlike. But you have to take care of these gifts. You have to exercise the common virtues of economy and thrift in your use of the divine gifts as in your use of the common things of daily life. You have to use wisely and not waste the Bread of God that came down from heaven, or that Bread of God will not feed you. You have to provide the basket in which to carry the unexhausted residue of the divine gift, or you may stand hungry in the very midst of plenty, and whilst within arm's length of you there is bread enough and to spare to feed the whole world.

The lesson of my text, which is most eminently brought out if we adopt the translation which I have referred to at the beginning of these remarks, is, then, just this: Christian men, be watchful stewards of that great gift of a living Christ, the food of your souls, that has been by miracle bestowed upon you. Such gathering together for future need of the unused residue of grace may be accomplished by three ways. First, there must be a diligent use of the grace given. See that you use to the very full, in the measure of your present power of absorbing and your present need, the gift bestowed upon you. Be sure that you take in as much of Christ as you can contain before you begin to think of what to do with the overplus. If we are not careful to take what we can, and to use what we need, of Christ, there is little chance of our being faithful stewards of the surplus. The water in a mill-stream runs over the trough in great abundance when the wheel is not working, and one reason why so many Christians seem to have so much more given to them in Christ than they need is because they are doing no work to use up the gift.

A second essential to such stewardship is the careful guarding of the grace given from whatever would injure it. Let not worldliness, business, cares of the world, the sorrows of

life, its joys, duties, anxieties or pleasures—let not these so come into your hearts that they will elbow Christ out of your hearts, and dull your appetite for the true Bread that came down from heaven.

And lastly, not only by use and by careful guarding, but also by earnest desire for larger gifts of the Christ who is large beyond all measure, shall we receive more and more of His sweetness and His preciousness into our hearts, and of His beauty and glory into our transfigured characters. The basket that we carry, this recipient heart of ours, is elastic. It can stretch to hold any amount that you like to put into it. The desire for more of Christ's grace will stretch its capacity, and as its capacity increases the inflowing gift greatens, and a larger Christ fills the larger room of my poor heart.

So the lesson is taught us of our prudence in the care and use of the grace bestowed on us, and we are bidden to cherish a happy confidence in the inexhaustible resources of Christ, and the continual gift in the future of even larger measures of grace, which are all ours already, given to us at the first reception of Him into our hearts, and only needing our faithfulness to be growingly ours in experience as they are ours from the first in germ.

IV. Finally, a solemn warning is implied in this command, and its reason 'that nothing be lost.'

Then there is a possibility of losing the gift that is freely given to us. We may waste the bread, and so, sometime or other when we are hungry, awake to the consciousness that it has dropped out of our slack hands. The abundance of Christ's grace may, so far as you are profited or enriched by it, be like the unclaimed millions of money which nobody asks for and that is of use to no living soul. You may be paupers while all God's riches in glory are at your disposal, and starving while baskets full of bread broken for us by Christ lie unused at our sides. Some of us have never tasted the sweetness or been fed by the nutritiousness of that Bread of God which came down from heaven. And more marvellous still, there may be some of us, who having come to Christ hungry and been fed by Him, have ceased to care for the pure nourishment and taste for the manna, and are turning again with gross appetite to the husks in the swine's trough. Negligent Christians! worldly Christians! you who care more for money and other dainties and delights which perish with the using—backsliding Christians, who once hungered and thirsted for more of Christ, and now have no longing for Him—awake to the danger in which you stand of letting all your spiritual wealth slip through your fingers; behold the treasures, yet unreached, within your grasp, and seek to garner and realise them. Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, lest everything be lost.

THE FIFTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'So when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid.'—JOHN vi. 19,20.

There are none of our Lord's parables recorded in this Gospel, but all the miracles which it narrates are parables. Moral and religious truth is communicated by the outward event, as in the parable it is communicated by the story. The mere visible fact becomes more than semi-transparent. The analogy between the spiritual and the natural world which men instinctively apprehend, of which the poet and the orator and the religious teacher have always made abundant use, and which it has sometimes been attempted, unsuccessfully as I think, to elevate to the rank of a scientific truth, underlies the whole series of these miracles. It is the principal if not the only key to the meaning of this one before us.

The symbolism which regards life under the guise of a voyage, and its troubles and difficulties under the metaphor of storm and tempest, is especially natural to nations that take kindly to the water, like us Englishmen. I do not know that there is any instance, either in the Old or in the New Testament, of the use of that to us very familiar metaphor; but the emblem of the sea as the symbol of trouble, unrest, rebellious power, is very familiar to the writers of the Old Testament. And the picture of the divine path as in the waters, and of the divine prerogative as being to 'tread upon the heights of the sea,' as Job has it, is by no means unknown. So the natural symbolism, and the Old Testament use of the expressions, blend together, as I think, in suggesting the one point of view from which this miracle is to be regarded.

It is found in two of the other Evangelists, and the condensed account of it which we have in this Gospel, by its omission of Peter's walking on the water, and of some other smaller but graphic details that the other Evangelists give us, serves to sharpen the symbolical meaning of the whole story, and to bring that as its great purpose and signification into prominence.

We shall, I think, then, best gain the lessons intended to be drawn if we simply follow the points of the narrative in their order as they stand here.

I. We have here, first of all, then, the struggling toilers.

The other Evangelists tell us that after the feeding of the five thousand our Lord 'constrained' His disciples to get into the ship, and to pass over to the other side. The language implies unwillingness, to some extent, on their part, and the exercise of authority upon His. Our Evangelist, who does not mention the constraint, supplies us with the reason for it. The preceding miracle had worked up the excitement of the mob to a very dangerous point. Crowds are always the same, and this crowd thought, as any other crowd anywhere and in any age would have done, that the prophet that could make bread at will was the kind of prophet whom they wanted. So they determined to take Him by force, and make Him a king; and Christ, seeing the danger, and not desiring that His Kingdom should be

furthered by such unclean hands and gross motives, determined to withdraw Himself into the loneliness of the bordering hills. It was wise to divide the little group; it would distract attention; it might lead some of the people, as we know it did lead them, to follow the boat when they found it was gone. It would save the Apostles from being affected by the coarse, smoky enthusiasm of the crowd. It would save them from revealing the place of His retirement. It might enable Him to steal away more securely unobserved; so they are sent across to the other side of the lake, some five or six miles. An hour or two might have done it, but for some unknown reason they seem to have lingered. Perhaps they had no special call for haste. The Paschal moon, nearly full, would be shining down upon the waters; their hearts and minds would be busy with the miracle which they had just seen. And so they may have drifted along, not caring much when they reached their destination. But suddenly one of the gusts of wind which are frequently found upon mountain lakes, especially towards nightfall, rose and soon became a gale with which they could not battle. Our Evangelist does not tell us how long it lasted, but we get a note of time from St. Mark, who says it was 'about the fourth watch of the night'; that is between the hours of three and six in the morning of the subsequent day. So that for some seven or eight hours at least they had been tugging at the useless oars, or sitting shivering, wet and weary, in the boat.

Is it not the history of the Church in a nutshell? Is it not the symbol of life for us all? The solemn law under which we live demands persistent effort, and imposes continual antagonism upon us; there is no reason why we should regard that as evil, or think ourselves hardly used, because we are not fair-weather sailors. The end of life is to make men; the meaning of all events is to mould character. Anything that makes me stronger is a blessing, anything that develops my *morale* is the highest good that can come to me. If therefore antagonism mould in me

'The wrestling thews that throw the world,'

and give me good, strong muscles, and put tan and colour into my cheek, I need not mind the cold and the wet, nor care for the whistling of the wind in my face, nor the dash of the spray over the bows. Summer sailing in fair weather, amidst land-locked bays, in blue seas, and under calm skies, may be all very well for triflers, but

'Blown seas and storming showers'

are better if the purpose of the voyage be to brace us and call out our powers.

And so be thankful if, when the boat is crossing the mouth of some glen that opens upon the lake, a sudden gust smites the sheets and sends you to the helm, and takes all your effort to keep you from sinking. Do not murmur, or think that God's Providence is strange, because many and many a time when 'it is dark, and Jesus is not yet come to us,' the storm of wind comes down upon the lake and threatens to drive us from our course. Let us rather recognise Him as the Lord who, in love and kindness, sends all the different kinds of weather which, according to the old proverb, make up the full-summed year.

And then notice how, in this first picture of our text, the symbolism so naturally lends itself to spiritual meanings, not only in regard to the tempest that caught the unthinking voyagers, but also in regard to other points; such as the darkness amidst which they had to fight the tempest, and the absence of the Master. Once before, they had been caught in a similar storm on the lake, but it was daylight then, and Jesus was with them, and that made

all the difference. This time it was night, and they looked up in vain to the green Eastern hills, and wondered where in their folds He was lurking, so far from their help. Mark gives us one sweet touch when he tells us that Christ on the hillside there *saw* them toiling in rowing, but they did not see Him. No doubt they felt themselves deserted, and sent many a wistful glance of longing towards the shore where He was. Hard thoughts of Him may have been in some of their minds. 'Master, carest Thou not?' would be springing to some of their lips with more apparent reason than in the other storm on the lake. But His calm and loving gaze looked down pitying on all their fear and toil. The darkness did not hide from Him, nor His own security on the steadfast land make Him forget, nor his communion with the Father so absorb Him as to exclude thoughts of them.

It is a parable and a prophecy of the perpetual relation between the absent Lord and the toiling Church. He is on the mountain while we are on the sea. The stable eternity of the Heavens holds Him; we are tossed on the restless mutability of time, over which we toil at His command. He is there interceding for us. Whilst He prays He beholds, and He beholds that He may help us by His prayer. The solitary crew were not so solitary as they thought. That little dancing speck on the waters, which held so much blind love and so much fear and trouble, was in His sight, as on the calm mountain-top He communed with God. No wonder that weary hearts and lonely ones, groping amidst the darkness, and fighting with the tempests and the sorrows of lift, have ever found in our story a symbol that comes to them with a prophecy of hope and an assurance of help, and have rejoiced to know that they on the sea are beheld of the Christ in the sky, and that 'the darkness hideth not from' His loving eye.

II. And now turn to the next stage of the story before us. We have the approaching Christ.

'When they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs,' and so were just about the middle of the lake, 'they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the ship.' They were about half-way across the lake. We do not know at what hour in the fourth watch the Master came. But probably it was towards daybreak. Toiling had endured for a night. It would be in accordance with the symbolism that joy and help should come with the morning.

If we look for a moment at the miraculous fact, apart from the symbolism, we have a revelation here of Christ as the Lord of the material universe, a kingdom wider in its range and profounder in its authority than that which that shouting crowd had sought to force upon Him. His will consolidated the yielding wave, or sustained His material body on the tossing surges. Whether we suppose the miracle as wrought on the one or the other, makes no difference to its value as a manifestation of the glory of Christ, and of His power over the physical order of things. In the latter case there would, perhaps, be a hint of a power residing in His material frame, of which we possibly have other phases, as in the Transfiguration, which may be a prophecy of what lordship over nature is possible to a sinless manhood. However that may be, we have here a wonderful picture which is true for all ages of the mighty Christ, to whose gentle footfall the unquiet surges are as a marble pavement; and who draws near in the purposes of His love, unhindered by antagonism, and using even opposing forces as the path for His triumphant progress. Two lessons may be drawn from this. One is that in His marvellous providence Christ uses all the tumults and unrest, the opposition and tempests which surround the ship that bears His followers, as

the means of achieving His purposes. We stand before a mystery to which we have no key when we think of these two certain facts; first, the Omnipotent redeeming will of God in Christ; and, second, the human antagonism which is able to rear itself against that. And we stand in the presence of another mystery, most blessed, and yet which we cannot unthread, when we think, as we most assuredly may, that in some mysterious fashion He works His purposes by the very antagonism to His purposes, making even head-winds fill the sails, and planting His foot on the white crests of the angry and changeful billows. How often in the world's history has this scene repeated itself, and by a divine irony the enemies have become the helpers of Christ's cause, and what they plotted for destruction has turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel! 'He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and with the residue thereof He girdeth Himself.'

Another lesson for our individual lives is this, that Christ, in His sweetness and His gentle sustaining help, comes near to us all across the sea of sorrow and trouble. A more tender, a more gracious sense of His nearness to us is ever granted to us in the time of our darkness and our grief than is possible to us in the sunny hours of joy. It is always the stormy sea that Christ comes across, to draw near to us; and they who have never experienced the tempest have yet to learn the inmost sweetness of His presence. When it is night, and it is dark, at the hour which is the keystone of night's black arch, Christ comes to us, striding across the stormy waters. Sorrow brings *Him* near to *us*. Do you see that sorrow does not drive *you* away from Him!

III. Then, still further, we note in the story before us the terror and the recognition.

St. John does not tell us why they were afraid. There is no need to tell us. They see, possibly in the chill uncertain light of the grey dawn breaking over the Eastern hills, a Thing coming to them across the water there. They had fought gallantly with the storm, but this questionable shape freezes their heart's blood, and a cry, that is audible above even the howling of the wind and the dash of the waves, gives sign of the superstitious terror that crept round the hearts of those commonplace, rude men.

I do not dwell upon the fact that the average man, if he fancies that anything from out of the Unseen is near him, shrinks in fear. I do not ask you whether that is not a sign and indication of the deep conviction that lies in men's souls, of a discord between themselves and the unseen world; but I ask you if we do not often mistake the coming Master, and tremble before Him when we ought to be glad?

We are often so absorbed with our work, so busy tugging at the oar, so anxiously watching the set of current, so engaged in keeping the helm right, that we have no time and no eyes to look across the ocean and see who it is that is coming to us through all the hurly-burly. Our tears fill our eyes, and weave a veil between us and the Master. And when we do see that there is Something there, we are often afraid of it, and shrink from it. And sometimes when a gentle whisper of consolation, or some light air, as it were, of consciousness of His presence, breathes through our souls, we think that it is only a phantasm of our own making, and that the coming Christ is nothing more than the play of our thoughts and imaginations.

Oh, brethren, let no absorption in cares and duties, let no unchildlike murmurings, let no selfish abandonment to sorrow, blind you to the Lord who always comes near troubled

hearts, if they will only look and see! Let no reluctance to entertain religious ideas, no fear of contact with the Unseen, no shrinking from the thought of Christ as a *Kill-joy* keep you from seeing Him as He draws near to you in your troubles. And let no sly, mocking Mephistopheles of doubt, nor any poisonous air, blowing off the foul and stagnant marshes of present materialism, make you fancy that the living Reality, treading on the flood there, is a dream or a fancy or the projection of your own imagination on to the void of space. He is real, whatever may be phenomenal and surface. The storm is not so real as the Christ, the waves not so substantial as He who stands upon them. They will pass and quieten, He will abide for ever. Lift up your hearts and be glad, because the Lord comes to you across the waters, and hearken to His voice: 'It is I! Be not afraid.'

The encouragement not to fear follows the proclamation, 'It is I!' What a thrill of glad confidence must have poured itself into their hearts, when once they rose to the height of that wondrous fact!

'Well roars the storm to those who hear
A deeper voice across the storm.'

There is no fear in the consciousness of His presence. It is His old word: 'Be not afraid!' And He breathes it whithersoever He comes; for His coming is the banishment of danger and the exorcism of dread. So that if only you and I, in the midst of all storm and terror, can say 'It is the Lord,' then we may catch up the grand triumphant chorus of the old psalm, and say: 'Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet I will not fear.' The Lord is with us; the everlasting Christ is our Helper, our Refuge, and our Strength.

IV. So, lastly, we have here in this story the end of the tempest and of the voyage.

Our Evangelist does not record, as the others do, that the storm ceased upon Christ's being welcomed into the little boat. The other Evangelists do not record, as he does, the completion of the voyage. 'Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.' The two things are cause and effect. I do not suppose, as many do, that a subordinate miracle is to be seen in that last clause of our text, or that the 'immediately' is to be taken as if it meant that without one moment's delay, or interval, the voyage was completed; but only, which I think is all that is needful, that the falling of the tempest and the calming of the waters which followed upon the Master's entrance into the vessel made the remainder of the voyage comparatively brief and swift.

It is not always true, it is very seldom true, that when Christ comes on board opposition ends, and the haven is reached. But it is always true that when Christ comes on board a new spirit enters into the men who have Him for their companion, and are conscious that they have. It makes their work easy, and makes them 'more than conquerors' over what yet remains. With what a different spirit the weary men would bend their backs to the oars once more when they had the Master on board, and with what a different spirit you and I will set ourselves to our work if we are sure of His presence. The worst of trouble is gone when Christ shares it with us. There is a wonderful charm to stay His rough wind in the assurance that in all our affliction He is afflicted. If we feel that we are following in His footsteps, we feel that He stands between us and the blast, a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest. And if still, as no doubt will be the case, we have our share of

trouble and storm and sorrow and difficulty, yet the worst of the gale will be passed, and though a long swell may still heave, the terror and the danger will have gone with the night, and hope and courage and gladness revive as the morning's sun breaks over the still unquiet waves, and shows us our Master with us and the white walls of the port glinting in the level beams.

Friends, life is a voyage, anyhow, with plenty of storm and danger and difficulty and weariness and exposure and anxiety and dread and sorrow, for every soul of man. But if you will take Christ on board, it will be a very different thing from what it will be if you cross the wan waters alone. Without Him you will make shipwreck of yourselves; with Him your voyage may seem perilous and be tempestuous, but He will 'make the storm a calm,' and will bring you to the haven of your desire.

HOW TO WORK THE WORK OF GOD

'Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye, believe on Him whom He hath sent.'—JOHN vi. 28, 29.

The feeding of the five thousand was the most 'popular' of Christ's miracles. The Evangelist tells us, with something between a smile and a sigh, that 'when the people saw it, they said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world,' and they were so delighted with Him and with it, that they wanted to get up an insurrection on the spot, and make a King of Him. I wonder if there are any of that sort of people left. If two men were to come into Manchester to-morrow morning, and one of them were to offer material good, and the other wisdom and peace of heart, which of them, do you think, would have the larger following? We need not cast a stone at the unblushing, frank admiration that these men had for a Prophet who could feed them, for that is exactly the sort of prophet that a great number of us would like best if they spoke out.

So Jesus Christ had to escape from the inconvenient enthusiasm of these mistaken admirers of His; and they followed Him in their eagerness, but were met with words which lift them into another region and damp their zeal. He tries to turn away their thoughts from the miracle to a far loftier gift. He contrasts the trouble which they willingly took in order to get a meal with their indifference as to obtaining the true bread from heaven, and He bids them work for it just as they had shown themselves ready to work for the other.

They put to Him this question of my text, so strangely blending as it does right and wrong, 'You have bid us work; tell us how to work? What must we do that we may work the works of God?' Christ answers, in words that illuminate their confusions and clear the whole matter, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

I. Faith, then, is a work.

You know that the commonplace of evangelical teaching opposes faith to works; and the opposition is perfectly correct, if it be rightly understood. But I have a strong impression that a great deal of our preaching goes clean over the heads of our hearers, because we take for granted, and they fancy that they understand, the meaning of terms because the terms themselves are so familiar. And I believe that many people go to churches and chapels all their lives long, and hear this doctrine dinned into them, that they are to be saved by faith, and not by works, and never approach a definite understanding of what it means.

So let me just for a moment try to clear up the terms of this apparently paradoxical statement that faith is a work. What do we mean by faith? What do you mean by saying that you have faith in your friend, in your wife, in your husband, in your guide? You simply mean, and we mean, that you trust the person, grasping him by the act of trust. On trust the whole fabric of human society depends, as well as in another aspect of the same expression does the whole fabric of Manchester commerce. Faith, confidence, the leaning of myself on one discerned to be true, trusty, strong, sufficient for the purpose in hand, whatever it may

be—that, and nothing more mysterious, nothing further away from daily life and the common emotions which knit us to one another, is, as I take it, what the New Testament means when it insists upon faith.

Ah, we all exercise it. You put it forth in certain low levels and directions. 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,' is the short summary of the happy lives of many, I have no doubt, of my present hearers. Have you none of that confidence to spare for God? Is it all meant to be poured out upon weak, fallible, changeful creatures like ourselves, and none of it to rise to the One in whom absolute confidence may eternally be fixed?

But then, of course, as we may see by the exercise of the same emotion in regard to one Another, the under side (as I have been accustomed to say to you) of this confidence in God or Christ is diffidence of myself. There is no real exercise of confidence which does not involve, as an essential part of itself, the going out from myself in order that I may lay all the weight and the responsibility of the matter in hand upon Him in whom I trust. And so Christian faith is compounded of these two elements, or rather, it has these two sides which correspond to one another. The same figure is convex or concave according as you look at it from one side or another. If you look at faith from one side, it rises towards God; if from the other, it hollows itself out into a great emptiness. And so the under side of faith is distrust; and he that puts his confidence in God thereby goes out of himself, and declares that in himself there is nothing to rest upon.

Now that two-sided confidence and diffidence, trust and distrust, which are one, is truly a work. It is not an easy one either; it is the exercise of our own inmost nature. It is an effort of will. It has to be done by coercing ourselves. It has to be maintained in the face of many temptations and difficulties. The contrast between faith and work is between an inward act and a crowd of outward performances. But the faith which knits me to God is my act, and I am responsible for it.

But yet it is not a work, just because it is a ceasing from my own works, and going out from myself that He may enter in. Only remember, when we say, 'Not by works of righteousness, but by the faith of Christ,' we are but proclaiming that the inward man must exercise that act of self-abnegation and confession of its own impotence, and ceasing from all reliance on anything which it does, whereby, and whereby alone, it can be knit to God. 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life…. This is the work of God, that ye believe.' You are responsible for doing that, or for not doing it.

II. Secondly, faith, and not a multitude of separate acts, is what pleases God.

Mark the difference between the form of the question and that of the answer. The people say, 'What are we to do that we may work the *works* of God?' Christ answers in the singular: 'This is the *work*.' They thought of a great variety of observances and deeds. He gathers them all up into one. They thought of a pile, and that the higher it rose the more likely they were to be accepted. He unified the requirement, and He brought it all down to this one act, in which all other acts are included, and on which alone the whole weight of a man's salvation is to rest. 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' is a question asked in all sorts of ways, by the hearts of men all round about us; and what a babble of answers comes! The priest says, 'Rites and ceremonies.' The thinker says, 'Culture,

education.' The moralist says, 'Do this, that, and the other thing,' and enumerates a whole series of separate acts. Jesus Christ says, 'One thing is needful…. This is the work of God.' He brushes away the sacerdotal answer and the answer of the mere moralist, and He says, 'No! Not *do*; but *trust*.' In so far as that is act, it is the only act that you need.

That is evidently reasonable. The man is more than his work; motive is more important than action; character is deeper than conduct. God is pleased, not by what men do, but by what men are. We must *be* first, and then we shall *do*. And it is obviously reasonable, because we can find analogies to the requirement in all other relations of life. What would you care for a child that scrupulously obeyed, and did not love or trust? What would a prince think of a subject who was ostentatious in acts of loyalty, and all the while was plotting and nurturing treason in his heart?

If doing separate acts of righteousness be the way to work the works of God, then no man has ever done them. For it is a plain fact that every man falls below his own conscience—which conscience is less scrupulous than the divine law. The worst of us knows a great deal more than the best of us does; and our lives, universally, are, at the best, lives of partial effort after unreached attainments of obedience and of virtue.

But, even supposing that we could perform, far more completely than we do, the requirements of our own consciences, and conform to the evident duties of our position and relations, do you think that without faith we should be therein working the works of God? Suppose a man were able fully to realise his own ideal of goodness, without any confidence in God underlying all his acts; do you think that these would be acts that would please God? It seems to me that, however lovely and worthy of admiration, looked at with human eyes only, many lives are, which have nobly and resolutely fought against evil, and struggled after good, if they have lacked the crowning grace of doing this for God's sake, they lack, I was going to say, almost everything; I will not say that, but I will say that they lack that which makes them acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. The poorest, the most imperfect realisation of our duty and ideal of conduct which has in it a love towards God and a faith in Him that would fain do better if it could, is a nobler thing, I venture to say, in the eyes of Heaven—which are the truth-seeing eyes—than the noblest achievements of an untrusting soul. It does not seem to me that to say so is bigotry or narrowness or anything else but the plain deduction from this, that a man's relation to God is the deepest thing about him, and that if that be right, other things will come right, and if that be wrong nothing is as right as it might be.

Here we have Jesus Christ laying the foundation for the doctrine which is often said to be Pauline, as if that meant something else than coming from Jesus Christ. We often hear people say, 'Oh, your evangelical teaching of justification by faith, and all that, comes out of Paul's Epistles, not out of Christ's teaching, nor out of John's Gospel.' Well, there is a difference, which it is blindness not to recognise, between the seeds of teaching in our Lord's words, and the flowers and fruit of these seeds, which we get in the more systematised and developed teaching of the Epistles. I frankly admit that, and I should expect it, with my belief as to who Christ is, and who Paul is. But in that saying, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' is the germ of everything that Paul has taught us about the works of the law being of no avail, and faith being alone and unfailing in its power of uniting men to God, and bringing them into the possession of

eternal life. The saying stands in John's Gospel, and so Paul and John alike received, though in different fashions, and wrought out on different lines of subsequent teaching, the germinal impulse from these words of the Master. Let us hear no more about salvation by faith being a Pauline addition to Christ's Gospel, for the lips of Christ Himself have declared 'this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

III. Thirdly, this faith is the productive parent of all separate works of God.

The teaching that I have been trying to enforce has, I know, been so presented as to make a pillow for indolence, and to be closely allied to immorality. It has been so presented, but it has not been so presented half as often as its enemies would have us believe. For I know of but very few, and those by no means the most prominent and powerful of the preachers of the great doctrine of salvation by faith, who have not added, as its greatest teacher did: 'Let ours also be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses.' But the true teaching is not that trust is a substitute for work, but that it is the foundation of work. The Gospel is, first of all, Trust; then, set yourselves to do the works of faith. It works by love, it is the opening of the heart to the entrance of the life of Christ, and, of course, when that life comes in, it will act in the man in a manner appropriate to its origin and source, and he that by faith has been joined to Jesus Christ, and has opened his heart to receive into that heart the life of Christ, will, as a matter of course, bring forth, in the measure of his faith, the fruits of righteousness.

We are surely not despising fruits and flowers when we insist upon the root from which they shall come. A man may take separate acts of partial goodness, as you see children in the springtime sticking daisies on the spikes of a thorn-twig picked from the hedges. But these will die. The basis of all righteousness is faith, and the manifestation of faith is practical righteousness. 'Show Me thy faith by thy works' is Christ's teaching quite as much as it is the teaching of His sturdy servant James. And so, dear friends, we are going the shortest way to enrich lives with all the beauties of possible human perfection when we say, 'Begin at the beginning. The longest way round is the shortest way home; trust Him with all your hearts first, and that will effloresce into "whatsoever things are lovely and whatever things are of good report."' In the beautiful metaphor of the Apostle Peter, in his second Epistle, Faith is the damsel who leads in the chorus of consequent graces; and we are exhorted to 'add to our faith virtue,' and all the others that unfold themselves in harmonious sequence from that one central source.

If I had time I should be glad to turn for a moment to the light which such considerations cast upon subjects that are largely occupying the attention of the Christian Church to-day. I should like to insist that, before you talk much about applied Christianity, you should be very sure that in men there *is* a Christianity to apply. I venture to profess my own humble belief that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, Christian ministers and churches will do no more for the social, political, and intellectual and moral advancement of men and the elevation of the people by sticking to their own work and preaching this Gospel—'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

IV. Lastly, this faith secures the bread of life.

The bread of life is the starting-point of the whole conversation. In the widest possible sense it is whatsoever truly stills the hunger of the immortal soul. In a deeper sense it is the

person of Jesus Christ Himself, for He not only says that He will *give*, but that He *is* the Bread of Life. And, in the deepest sense of all, it is His flesh broken for us in His sacrifice on the Cross. That bread is a gift. So the paradox results which stands in our text—*work* for the bread which God will *give*. If it be a gift, that fact determines what sort of work must be done in order to possess it. If it be a gift, then the only work is to accept it. If it be a gift, then we are out of the region of *quid pro quo*; and have not to bring, as Chinese do, great strings of copper cash that, all added up together, do not amount to a shilling, in order to buy what God will bestow upon us. If it be a gift, then to trust the Giver and to accept the gift is the only condition that is possible.

It is not a condition that God has invented and arbitrarily imposed. The necessity of it is lodged deep in the very nature of the case. Air cannot get to the lungs of a mouse in an air-pump. Light cannot come into a room where all the shutters are up and the keyhole stopped. If a man chooses to perch himself on some little stool of his own, with glass legs to it, and to take away his hand from the conductor, no electricity will come to him. If I choose to lock my lips, Jesus Christ does not prise open my clenched teeth to put the bread of life into my unwilling mouth. If we ask, we get; if we take, we get.

And so the paradox comes, that we work for a gift, with a work which is not work because it is a departure from myself. It is the same blessed paradox which the prophet spoke when he said, 'Buy … without money and without price.' Oh! what a burden of hopeless effort and weary toil—like that of the man that had to roll the stone up the hill, which ever slipped back again—is lifted from our shoulders by such a word as this that I have been poorly trying to speak about now! 'Thou art careful and troubled about many things,' poor soul! trying to be good; trying to fight yourself, and the world, and the devil. Try the other plan, and listen to Him saying, 'Give up self-imposed effort in thine own strength. Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

THE MANNA

'I am that bread of life. 49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.'—JOHN vi. 48-50.

'This is of a truth that Prophet,' said the Jews, when Christ had fed the five thousand on the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. That was the kind of Teacher for them; they were quite unaffected by the wisdom of His words and the beauty of His deeds, but a miracle that found food precisely met their wants, and so there was excited an impure enthusiasm, very unwelcome to Jesus. Therefore He withdrew Himself from it, and when the people followed Him, all full of expectation, to get some more loaves and see some more miracles, He met them with a douche of cold water that cooled their enthusiasm and flung them back into a critical, questioning mood. They pointed to the miracle of the manna, and hinted that, if He expected them to accept Him, He must do as Moses had done, or something like it. Probably there was a Jewish tradition in existence then to the effect that the Messiah was to repeat the miracle of the manna. But, at all events, Christ lays hold of the reference that they put into His hands, and He said in effect, 'Manna? Yes; I give, and am, the true Manna.'

So this is the third of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord pointed to Old Testament incidents and institutions as symbolising Himself. In the first of them, when He likened Himself to the ladder that Jacob saw, He claimed to be the Medium of communication between heaven and earth. In the second of them, when He likened Himself to the brazen serpent lifted in the camp, He claimed to be the Healer of a sin-stricken and poisoned world. And now, with an allusion both to the miracle and to the Jewish demand for the repetition of the manna sign, He claims to be the true Food for a starving world. So there are three things in my text: Christ's claim, His requirements, and His promise; the bread, the eating, the issues.

I. Here is a claim of Christ's.

As I have already said, in the whole wonderful conversation of which I have selected a portion for my text, there is a double reference to the miracle of the loaves and of the manna. What our Lord means to assert for Himself is that which is common to both of these—viz. that He supplies the great primal wants of humanity, the hunger of the heart. There may be another reference also, which I just notice without dwelling upon it. Barley loaves were the coarsest and least valuable form of bread. They were not only of little worth, but altogether inadequate to feeding the five thousand. The palates, unaccustomed to the stinging savours of the garlic and the leeks of Egypt, loathed the light bread. And so Jesus Christ comes into the world in lowly form, like the barley loaf or the light bread from which men whose tastes have been vitiated by the piquant savours of more earthly nourishment turn away as insipid. And yet He in His lowliness, He in His savourlessness, is

that which meets the deepest wants of humanity, and is every man's fare because He will be any man's satisfaction.

But I wish to bring before your notice the wonderful way in which our Lord, in this great dissertation concerning Himself as the Bread of Life, gradually unfolds the depths of His meaning and of His offer. He began with saying that He, the Son of Man, will give to men the bread that 'endures to everlasting life.' And then when that saying is but dimly understood, and yet awakes some strange new desires and appetites in the hearers, and they come to Him and ask, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' He answers them with opening another finger of His hand, as it were, and showing them a little more of the treasure that lies in His palm. For He says, 'I *am* that Bread of Life.' That is an advance on the previous saying. He gives bread, and any man that was conscious of possessing some great truth or some great blessing which, believed and accepted, would refresh and nourish humanity, might have said the same thing. But now we pass into the *penumbra* of a greater mystery: 'I am that Bread of Life.' You cannot separate what Christ gives from what Christ is. You can take the truths that another man proclaims, altogether irrespective of him and his personality. That only disturbs, and the sooner it is got rid of, the firmer and the purer our possession of the message for which he is only the medium. You can take Plato's teaching and do as you like with Plato. But you cannot take Christ's teaching and do as you like with Christ. His personality is the centre of His gift to the world. 'I am that Bread of Life.' That He should give it is much; that He should *be* it is far more.

And notice how, when He has thus drawn us a little further into the magic circle of the light, He not only asserts the inseparableness of His gift from His Person, but also asserts, with a reference, no doubt, to the manna, 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven.' The listeners immediately laid hold of that one point, and neglected for the moment all the rest, and they fixed with a true instinct—although it was for the purpose of contradicting it—on this central point, 'that came down from heaven.' They said one to the other, 'How can this man say that He came down from heaven? Is not this Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?' So, brethren, as the manna that descended from above in the dew of the night was to the bread that was baked in a baker's oven, so is the Christ to the manhood that has its origin in the natural processes of birth. The Incarnation of the Son of God, becoming Son of Man for us and for our salvation, is involved in this great claim. You do not get to the heart of Christ's message unless you have accepted this as the truth concerning Him, that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and that at a definite point in the long process of the ages, 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us.' He will never be 'the Bread of Life' unless He is 'the Bread that came down from heaven.' For humanity needs that the blue heavens that bend remote above should come down; and we cannot be lifted 'out of the horrible pit and the miry clay' unless a Hand from above be reached down into the depths of our degradation, and lift us from our lowness. Heaven must come to earth, if earth is to rise to heaven. The ladder must be let down from above, if ever from the lower levels men are to ascend thither where at the summit the face of God can be seen.

But that is not all. Our Lord, if I may recur to a former figure, went on to open another finger of His hand, and to show still more of the gift. For He not only said, 'the Son of Man gives the bread,' and 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven,' but He went on to say,

in a subsequent stage of the conversation, 'the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Now, notice that '*will* give.' Then, though the Word was made flesh, and the manna came down from heaven, the especial gift of His flesh for the life of the world was, at the time of His speaking, a future thing. And what He meant is still more clearly brought out, when we read other words which are the very climax of this conversation, when He declares that the condition of our having life in ourselves is our 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man.' The figure is made repulsive on purpose, in order that it may provoke us to penetrate to its meaning. It was even more repulsive to the Jew, with his religious horror of touching or tasting anything in which the blood was. And yet our Lord not only speaks of Himself as the Bread, but of His flesh and blood as being the Food of the world. The separation of the two clearly indicates a violent death, and I, for my part, have no manner of doubt that, in these great words in which our Lord lays bare the deepest foundations of His claim to be the Food of humanity, there is couched, in the veiled language which was necessary at the then stage of His mission, a distinct reference to His death, as being the Sacrifice on which a hunger-stricken world may feed and be satisfied.

So here we have, in three steps, the great central truth of the Gospel set forth in symbolical aspect: the Son that gives, the Son that is, the Bread of the world, and the death whereby His flesh and blood are separated and become the nourishment of all sin-stricken souls. I do not say one word to enforce these claims, but I beseech you deal fairly with these Gospel narratives, and do not go on picking out of them bits of Christ's actions or words, which commend themselves to you, and ignoring all the rest. There is no more reason to believe that Jesus Christ ever said, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them likewise,' or any other part of that Sermon on the Mount which some people take as their Christianity, than there is to believe that He said, 'The bread which I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Believe it or not, it is not dealing with the Scripture records as you deal with other historical records if, for subjective reasons, you brush aside all that department of our Lord's teaching. And if you do accept it, what becomes of His 'sweet reasonableness'? What becomes of His meekness and lowliness of heart? I was going to say what becomes of His sanity, that He should stand up, a youngish man from Nazareth, in the synagogue of Capernaum, and should say, 'I, heaven-descended, and slain by men, am the Bread of Life to the whole world'?

I was going to make another observation, which I must just pass with the slightest notice, and that is that, taking this point of view and giving full weight to these three stages of our Lord's progressive revelation of Himself, we have the answer to the question, What is the connection between these discourses and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? Our modern sacramentarian friends will have it that Jesus Christ is speaking of the Communion in this chapter. I take it, and I venture to think it the reasonable explanation, that He is not speaking about the Communion, but that this discourse and that rite are dealing with the same truths—the one in articulate words, the other in equivalent symbols. And so we have not to read into the text any allusion to the rite, but to see in the text and in the rite the proclamation of the same thing—viz. that the flesh and the blood of the Sacrifice for sins is the food on which a sinful and cleansed world may feed.

II. So, secondly, let me ask you to note our Lord's requirement here.

He carries on the metaphor. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.' The eating necessarily follows from the symbol of the bread, as the designation of the way by which we all, with our hungry hearts, may feed upon this Bread of God. I need not remind you that in many a place, and in this whole context, we find the explanation of the symbol very plainly. In another part of this conversation we read, under another metaphor which comes to the same thing, 'He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. So the eating and the coming are diverse symbols for the one thing, the believing. When a man eats he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his very being, the food of which he partakes. And when a man trusts Christ he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his inmost being, the very life of Jesus Christ. You say, 'That is mysticism'; but it is the New Testament teaching, that when I trust Christ I get more than His gifts—I get Himself; that when my faith goes out to Him it not only rests me on Him, but it brings Him into me, and that food of the spirit becomes the life, as we shall see, of *my* spirit.

That condition is indispensable. It is useless to have food on your table or your plate or in your hand, it does not nourish you there: you must eat it, and then you gain sustenance from it. Many a hungry man has died at the door of a granary. Some of us are starving, though beside us there is 'the Bread of God that came down from heaven.' Brethren, you must eat, and I venture to put the question to you—*not* Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the world's Saviour? *not* Do you believe in an Incarnation? *not* Do you believe in an Atonement? but Have you claimed your portion in the Bread? Have you taken it into your own lips? *Crede et manducasti*, said Augustine, 'believe'—or, rather, *trust*—'and thou hast eaten.' Have *you*?

Further, let me remind you that under this eating is included not only some initial act of faith, but a continuous course of partaking. The dinner you ate this day last year is of no use for to-day's hunger. The act of faith done long ago will not bring the Bread to nourish you now. You must repeat the meal. And very strikingly and beautifully in the last part of this conversation our Lord varies the word for eating, and substitutes—as if He were speaking to those who had fulfilled the previous condition—another one which implies the ruminant action of certain animals. And that is what Christian men have to do, to feed over and over and over again on the 'Bread of God which came down from heaven.' Christ, and especially in and through His death for us, can nourish and sustain our wills, giving them the pattern of what they should desire, and the motive for which they should desire it. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our consciences, and take away from them all the painful sense of guilt, while He sharpens them to a far keener sensitiveness to evil. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our understandings, and unveil therein the deepest truths concerning God and man, concerning man's destiny and God's mercy. Christ, and especially in His death, can feed our affections, and minister to love and desire and submission and hope their celestial nourishment. He is 'the Bread of God,' and we have but to eat of that which is laid before us.

III. So, lastly, we have here the issues.

'Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.' This Bread secures that if 'a man eat thereof he shall not die.' The bread that perishes feeds a life that perishes; but this Bread not only sustains but creates a life that cannot perish, and, taken into the spirits of

men that are 'dead in trespasses and sins,' imparts to them a life that has no affinity to evil, and therefore no dread of extinction.

If 'a man eats thereof he shall not die,' Christ annihilates for us the mere accident of physical death. That is only a momentary jolt on the course. That may all be crammed into a parenthesis. 'He shall not die,' but live the true life which comes from the possession of union with Him who is the Life. The bread which we eat sustains life; the Bread which He gives originates it. The bread which we eat is assimilated to our bodily frame, the Bread which He gives assimilates our spiritual nature to His. And so it comes to be the only food that stills a hungry heart, the only food that satisfies and yet never cloys, which, eating, we are filled, and being filled are made capable of more, and, being capable of more, receive more. In blessed and eternal alternation, fruition and desire, satisfaction and appetite, go on.

'Why do ye spend money for that which is not bread?' You cannot answer the question with any reasonable answer. Oh, dear friends! I beseech you, listen to that Lord who is saying to each of us, 'Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

ONE SAYING WITH TWO MEANINGS

'Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. 34. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.'—JOHN vii. 33, 34.

'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

No greater contrast can be conceived than that between these two groups to whom such singularly similar words were addressed. The one consists of the officers, tools of the Pharisees and of the priests, who had been sent to seize Christ, and would fain have carried out their masters' commission, but were restrained by a strange awe, inexplicable even to themselves. The other consists of the little company of His faithful, though slow, scholars, who made a great many mistakes, and sometimes all but tired out even His patience, and yet were forgiven much because they loved much. Hatred animated one group, loving sorrow the other.

Christ speaks to them both in nearly the same words, but with what a different tone, meaning, and application! To the officers the saying is an exhibition of His triumphant confidence that their malice is impotent and their arms paralysed; that when He wills He will *go*, not be dragged by them or any man, but go to a safe asylum, where foes can neither find nor follow. The officers do not understand what He means. They think that, bad Jew as they have always believed Him to be, He may very possibly consummate His apostasy by going over to the Gentiles altogether; but, at any rate, they feel that He is to escape their hands.

The disciples understand little more as to whither He goes, as they themselves confess a moment after; but they gather from His words His loving pity, and though the upper side of the saying seems to be menacing and full of separation, there is an under side that suggests the possibility of a reunion for them.

The words are nearly the same in both cases, but they are not absolutely identical. There are significant omissions and additions in the second form of them. 'Little children' is the tenderest of all the names that ever came from Christ's lips to His disciples, and never was heard on His lips except on this one occasion, for parting words ought to be very loving words. 'A little while I am with you,' but He does not say, 'And then I go to Him that sent Me.' 'Ye shall seek Me,' but He does not say, 'And shall not find Me.' 'As I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you,' that little word 'now' makes the announcement a truth for the present only. His disciples shall not seek Him in vain, but when they seek they shall find. And though for a moment they be parted from Him, it is with the prospect and the confidence of reunion. Let us, then, look at the two main thoughts here. First, the two 'seekings,' the seeking which is vain, and the seeking which is never vain; and the two 'cannots,' the inability of His enemies for evermore to come where He is, and the inability of His friends, for a little season, to come where He is.

I. The two seekings.

As I have observed, there is a very significant omission in one of the forms of the words. The enemies are told that they will never find Him, but no such dark words are spoken to the friends. So, then, hostile seeking of the Christ is in vain, and loving seeking of Him by His friends, though they understand Him but very poorly, and therefore seek Him that they may know Him better, is always answered and over-answered.

Let me deal just for a moment or two with each of these. In their simplest use the words of my first text merely mean this: 'You cannot touch Me, I am passing into a safe asylum where your hands can never reach Me.'

We may generalise that for a moment, though it does not lie directly in our path, and preach the old blessed truth that no man with hostile intent seeking for Christ in His person, in His Gospel, or in His followers and friends, can ever find Him. All the antagonism that has stormed against Him and His cause and words, and His followers and lovers, has been impotent and vain. The pursuers are like dogs chasing a bird, sniffing along the ground after their prey, which all the while sits out of their reach on a bough, and carols to the sky. As in the days of His flesh, His foes could not touch His person till He chose, and vainly sought Him when it pleased Him to hide from them, so ever since, in regard to His cause, and in regard to all hearts that love Him, no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. They shall be wrapped, when need be, in a cloud of protecting darkness, and stand safe within its shelter. Take good cheer, all you that are trying to do anything, however little, however secular it may appear to be, for the good and well-being of your fellows! All such service is a prolongation of Christ's work, and an effluence from His, if there be any good in it at all; and it is immortal and safe, as is His. 'Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me.'

But then, besides that, there is another thought. It is not merely hostile seeking of Him that is hopeless vain. When the dark days came over Israel, under the growing pressure of the Roman yoke, and amidst the agonies of that last siege, and the unutterable sufferings which all but annihilated the nation, do you not think that there were many of these people who said to themselves: 'Ah! if we had only that Jesus of Nazareth back with us for a day or two; if we had only listened to Him!' Do you not think that before Israel dissolved in blood there were many of those who had stood hostile or alienated, who desired to see 'one of the days of the Son of Man,' and did not see it? They sought Him, not in anger any more; they sought Him, not in penitence, or else they would have found Him; but they sought Him simply in distress, and wishing that they could have back again what they had cared so little for when they had it.

And are there no people listening to me now, to whom these words apply?—

'He that will not, when he may,
When he will it shall be—Nay!'

Although it is (blessed be His name) always true that a seeking heart finds Him, and whensoever there is the faintest trace of penitent desire to get hold of Christ's hand it does grasp ours, it is also true that things neglected once cannot be brought back; that the sowing time allowed to pass can never return; and that they who have turned, as some of you have turned, dear friends, all your lives, a deaf ear to the Christ that asks you to love

Him and trust Him, may one day wish that it had been otherwise, and go to look for Him and not find Him.

There is another kind of seeking that is vain, an intellectual seeking without the preparation of the heart. There are, no doubt, some people here to-day that would say, 'We have been seeking the truth about religion all our lives, and we have not got to it yet.' Well, I do not want to judge either your motives or your methods, but I know this, that there is many a man who goes on the quest for religious certainty, and looks *at*, if not *for* Jesus Christ, and is not really capable of discerning Him when he sees Him, because his eye is not single, or because his heart is full of worldliness or indifference, or because he begins with a foregone conclusion, and looks for facts to establish that; or because he will not cast down and put away evil things that rise up between him and his Master.

My brother! if you go to look for Jesus Christ with a heart full of the world, if you go to look for Him while you wish to hold on by all the habitudes and earthlinesses of your past, you will never find Him. The sensualist seeks for Him, the covetous man seeks for Him, the passionate, ill-tempered man seeks for Him; the woman plunged in frivolities, or steeped to the eyebrows in domestic cares,—these may in some feeble fashion go to look for Him and they will not find Him, because they have sought for Him with hearts overcharged with other things and filled with the affairs of this life, its trifles and its sins.

I turn for a moment to the seeking that is not vain. 'Ye shall seek Me' is not on Christ's lips to any heart that loves Him, however imperfectly, a sentence of separation or an appointment of a sorrowful lot, but it is a blessed law, the law of the Christian life.

That life is all one great seeking after Christ. Love seeks the absent when removed from our sight. If we care anything about Him at all, our hearts will turn to Him as naturally as, when the winter begins to pinch, the migrating birds seek the sunny south, impelled by an instinct that they do not themselves understand.

The same law which sends loving thoughts out across the globe to seek for husband, child, or friend when absent, sets the really Christian heart seeking for the Christ, whom, having not seen, it loves, as surely as the ivy tendril feels out for a support. As surely as the roots of a mountain-ash growing on the top of a boulder feel down the side of the rock till they reach the soil; as surely as the stork follows the warmth to the sunny Mediterranean, so surely, if your heart loves Christ, will the very heart and motive of your action be the search for Him.

And if you do *not* seek Him, brother, as surely as He is parted from our sense you will lose Him, and He will be parted from you wholly, for there is no way by which a person who is not before our eyes may be kept near us except only by diligent effort on our part to keep thought and love and will all in contact with Him; thought meditating, love going out towards Him, will submitting. Unless there be this effort, you will lose your Master as surely as a little child in a crowd will lose his nurse and his guide, if his hand slips from out the protecting hand. The dark shadow of the earth on which you stand will slowly steal over His silvery brightness, as when the moon is eclipsed, and you will not know how you have lost Him, but only be sadly aware that your heaven is darkened. 'Ye shall seek Me,' is the condition of all happy communion between Christ and us.

And that seeking, dear brother, in the threefold form in which I have spoken of it—effort to keep Him in our thoughts, in our love, and over our will—is neither a seeking which starts from a sense that we do not possess Him, nor one which ends in disappointment. But we seek for Him because we already have Him in a measure, and we seek Him that we may possess Him more abundantly, and anything is possible rather than that such a search shall be vain. Men may go to created wells, and find no water, and return ashamed, and with their vessels empty, but every one who seeks for that Fountain of salvation shall draw from it with joy. It is as impossible that a heart which desires Jesus Christ shall not have Him, as it is that lungs dilated shall not fill with air, or as it is that an empty vessel put out in a rainfall shall not be replenished. He does not hide Himself, but He desires to be found. May I say that as a mother will sometimes pretend to her child to hide, that the child's delight may be the greater in searching and in finding, so Christ has gone away from our sight in order, for one reason, that He may stimulate our desires to feel after Him! If we seek Him hid in God, we shall find Him for the joy of our hearts.

A great thinker once said that he would rather have the search after truth than the possession of truth. It was a rash word, but it pointed to the fact that there is a search which is only one shade less blessed than the possession. And if that be so in regard to any pure and high truth, it is still more so about Christ Himself. To seek for Him is joy; to find Him is joy. What can be a happier life than the life of constant pursuit after an infinitely precious object, which is ever being sought and ever being found; sought with a profound consciousness of its preciousness, found with a widening appreciation and capacity for its enjoyment? 'Ye shall seek Me' is a word not of evil but of good cheer; for buried in the depth of the commandment to search is the promise that we shall find.

II, Secondly, let us look briefly at these two 'cannots.'

'Whither I go, ye cannot come,' says He to His enemies, with no limitation, with no condition. The 'cannot' is absolute and permanent, so long as they retain their enmity. To His friends, on the other hand, He says, 'So now I say to you,' the law for to-day, the law for this side the flood, but not the law for the beyond, as He explains more fully in the subsequent words: 'Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.'

So, then, Christ is somewhere. When He passed from life it was not into a state only, but into a place; and He took with Him a material body, howsoever changed. He is somewhere, and there friend and enemy alike cannot enter, so long as they are compassed with 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.' But the incapacity is deeper than that. No sinful man can pass thither. Where has He gone? The preceding words give us the answer. 'God shall glorify Him in Himself.' The prospect of that assumption into the inmost glory of the divine nature directly led our Lord to think of the change it would bring about in the relation of His humble friends to Him. While for Himself He triumphs in the prospect, He cannot but turn a thought to their lonesomeness, and hence come the words of our text. He has passed into the bosom and blaze of divinity. Can I walk there, can I pass into that tremendous fiery furnace? 'Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?' 'Ye cannot follow Me now.' No man can go thither except Christ goes thither.

There are deep mysteries lying in that word of our Lords,—'I go to prepare a place for you.' We know not what manner of activity on His part that definitely means. It seems as if

somehow or other the presence in Heaven of our Brother in His glorified humanity was necessary in order that the golden pavement should be trodden by our feet, and that our poor, feeble manhood should live and not be shrivelled up in the blaze of that central brightness.

We know not how He prepares the place, but heaven, whatever it be, is no place for a man unless the Man, Christ Jesus, be there. He is the Revealer of God, not only for earth, but for heaven; not only for time, but for eternity. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,' is true everywhere and always, there as here. So I suppose that, but for His presence, heaven itself would be dark, and its King invisible, and if a man could enter there he would either be blasted with unbearable flashes of brightness or grope at its noonday as the blind, because his eye was not adapted to such beams. Be that as it may, 'the Forerunner is for us entered.' He has gone before, because He knows the great City, 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity.' He has gone before to make ready a lodging for us, in whose land He has dwelt so long, and He will meet us, who would else be bewildered like some dweller in a desert if brought to the capital, when we reach the gates, and guide our unaccustomed steps to the mansion prepared for us.

But the power to enter there, even when He is there, depends on our union with Christ by faith. When we are joined to Him, the absolute 'cannot,' based upon flesh, and still more upon sin, which is a radical and permanent impossibility, is changed into a relative and temporary incapacity. If we have faith in Christ, and are thereby drawing a kindred life from Him, our nature will be in process of being changed into that which is capable of bearing the brilliance of the felicities of heaven. But just as these friends of Christ, though they loved Him very truly, and understood Him a little, were a long way from being ready to follow Him, and needed the schooling of the Cross, and Olivet, and Pentecost, as well as the discipline of life and toil, before they were fully ripe for the harvest, so we, for the most part, have to pass through analogous training before we are prepared for the place which Christ has prepared for us. Certainly, so soon as a heart has trusted Christ, it is capable of entering where He is, and the real reason why the disciples could not come where He went was that they did not yet clearly know Him as the divine Sacrifice for theirs and the world's sins, and, however much they believed in Him as Messiah, had not yet, nor could have, the knowledge on which they could found their trust in Him as their Saviour.

But, while that is true, it is also true that each advance in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour will bring with it capacity to advance further into the heart of the far-off land, and to see more of the King in His beauty. So, as long as His friends were wrapped in such dark clouds of misconception and error, as long as their Christian characters were so imperfect and incomplete as they were at the time of my text being spoken, they could not go thither and follow Him. But it was a diminishing impossibility, and day by day they approximated more and more to His likeness, because they understood Him more, and trusted Him more, and loved Him more, and grew towards Him, and, therefore, day by day became more and more able to enter into that Kingdom.

Are you growing in power so to do? Is the only thing which unfits you for heaven the fact that you have a mortal body? In other respects are you fit to go into that heaven, and walk in its brightness and not be consumed? The answer to the question is found in another

one—Are you joined to Jesus Christ by simple faith? The incapacity is absolute and eternal if the enmity is eternal.

State and place are determined yonder by character, and character is determined by faith. Take a bottle of some solution in which heterogeneous substances have all been melted up together, and let it stand on a shelf and gradually settle down, and its contents will settle in regular layers, the heaviest at the bottom and the lightest at the top, and stratify themselves according to gravity. And that is how the other world is arranged—stratified. When all the confusions of this present are at an end, and all the moisture is driven off, men and women will be left in layers, like drawing to like. As Peter said about Judas with equal wisdom and reticence, 'He went to his own place.' That is where we shall all go, to the place we are fit for.

God does not slam the door of heaven in anybody's face; it stands wide open. But there is a mystic barrier, unseen, but most real, more repellent than cherub and flaming sword, which makes it impossible for any foot to cross that threshold except the foot of the man whose heart and nature have been made Christlike, and fitted for heaven by simple faith in Him.

Love Him and trust Him, and then your life on earth will be a blessed seeking and a blessed finding of Him whom to seek is joyous effort, whom to find is an Elysium of rest. You will walk here not parted from Him, but with your thoughts and your love, which are your truest self, going up where He is, until you drop 'the muddy vesture of decay' which unfits you whilst you wear it for the presence-chamber of the King, and so you will enter in and be 'for ever with the Lord.'

THE ROCK AND THE WATER

'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. 38. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'—JOHN vii. 37,38.

The occasion and date of this great saying are carefully given by the Evangelist, because they throw much light on its significance and importance. It was 'on the last day, that great day of the Feast,' that 'Jesus stood and cried.' The Feast was that of Tabernacles, which was instituted in order to keep in mind the incidents of the desert wandering. On the anniversary of this day the Jews still do as they used to, and in many a foul ghetto and frowsy back street of European cities, you will find them sitting beneath the booths of green branches, commemorating the Exodus and its wonders. Part of that ceremonial was that on each morning of the seven, and possibly on the eighth, 'the last day of the Feast,' a procession of white-robed priests wound down the rocky footpath from the Temple to Siloam, and there in a golden vase drew water from the spring, chanting, as they ascended and re-entered the Temple gates where they poured out the water as a libation, the words of the prophet, 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

Picture the scene to yourselves—the white-robed priests toiling up the pathway, the crowd in the court, the sparkling water poured out with choral song. And then, as the priests stood with their empty vases, there was a little stir in the crowd, and a Man who had been standing watching, lifted up a loud voice and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto *Me*, and drink.' Strange words to say, anywhere and anywhen, daring words to say there in the Temple court! For there and then they could mean nothing less than Christ's laying His hand on that old miracle, which was pointed to by the rite, when the rock yielded the water, and asserting that all which it did and typified was repeated, fulfilled, and transcended in Himself, and that not for a handful of nomads in the wilderness, but for all the world, in all its generations.

So here is one more instance to add to those to which I have directed your attention on former occasions, in which, in this Gospel, we find Christ claiming to be the fulfilment of incidents and events in that ancient covenant, Jacob's ladder, the brazen serpent, the manna, and now the rock that yielded the water. He says of them all that they are the shadow, and the substance is in Him.

I. So then, we have to look, first, at Christ's view of humanity as set forth here.

You remember the story of how the people in the wilderness, distressed by that most imperative of all physical cravings, thirst, turned upon Moses and Aaron and said, 'Why have ye brought us here to die in the wilderness, where there are neither vines nor pomegranates,' but a land of thirst and death? Just as Christ, in the former instances to which we have already referred, selected and pointed to the poisoned and serpent-stricken camp as an emblem of humanity, and just as He pointed to the hunger of the men that were starving there, as an emblem, go here He says: 'That is the world—a congregation of thirsty

men raging in their pangs, and not knowing where to find solace or slaking for their thirst.' I do not need to go over all the dominant desires that surge up in men's souls, the mind craving for knowledge, the heart calling out for love, the whole nature feeling blindly and often desperately after something external to itself, which it can grasp, and in which it can feel satisfied. You know them; we all know them. Like some plant growing in a cellar, and with feeble and blanched tendrils feeling towards the light which is so far away, every man carries about within himself a whole host of longing desires, which need to find something round which they may twine, and in which they can be at rest.

'The misery of man is great upon him,' because, having these desires, he misreads so many of them, and stifles, ignores, atrophies to so large an extent the noblest of them. I know of no sadder tragedy than the way in which we misinterpret the meaning of these inarticulate cries that rise from the depths of our hearts, and misunderstand what it is that we are groping after, when we put out empty, and, alas! too often unclean, hands, to lay hold on our true good.

Brethren, you do not know what you want, many of you, and there is something pathetic in the endless effort to fill up the heart by a multitude of diverse and small things, when all the while the deepest meaning of aspirations, yearnings, longings, unrest, discontent is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' Nothing less than infinitude will satisfy the smallest heart of the humblest and least developed man. Nothing less than to have all our treasures in one accessible, changeless Infinity will ever give rest to a human soul. You have tried a multiplicity of trifles. It takes a great many bags of coppers to make up L. 1000, and they are cumbrous to carry. Would it not be better to part with a multitude of goodly pearls, if need be, in order to have all your wealth, and the satisfaction of all your desires, in the 'One Pearl of great price'? It is God for whom men are thirsting, and, alas! so many of us know it not. As the old prophet says, in words that never lose their pathetic power, 'they have hewn out for themselves cisterns'—one is not enough—they need many. They are only cisterns, which hold what is put into them, and they are 'broken cisterns,' which cannot hold it. Yet we turn to these with a strange infatuation, which even the experience that teaches fools does not teach us to be folly. We turn *to* these; and we turn *from* the Fountain; the one, the springing, the sufficient, the unfailing, the exuberant Fountain of living waters. Some of you have cisterns on the tops of your houses, with a coating of green scum and soot on them, and do you like that foul draught better than the bright blessing that comes out of the heart of the rock, flashing and pure?

But not only are these desires misread, but the noblest of them are stifled. I have said that the condition of humanity is that of thirst. Christ speaks in my text as if that thirst was by no means universal, and, alas! it is not, '*If* any man thirst'; there are some of us that do not, for we are all so constituted that, unless by continual self-discipline, and self-suppression, and self-evolution, the lower desires will overgrow the loftier ones, and kill them, as weeds will some precious crop. And some of you are so much taken up with gratifying the lowest necessities and longings of your nature, that you leave the highest all uncared for, and the effect of that is that the unsatisfied longing avenges itself, for your neglect of it, by infusing unrest and dissatisfaction into what else would satisfy the lowest. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase,' but he that loves God will be satisfied with less than silver, and will continue

satisfied when decrease comes. If you would suck the last drop of sweetness out of the luscious purple grapes that grow on earth, you must have the appetite after the best things, recognised, and ministered to, and satisfied. And when we are satisfied with God, we shall 'have learnt in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be self-sufficing.' But, as I say, the highest desires are neglected, and the lowest are cockered and pampered, and so the taste is depraved. Many of you have no wish for God, and no desire after high and noble things, and are perfectly contented to browse on the low levels, or to feed on 'the husks that the swine do eat,' whilst all the while the loftiest of your powers is starving within. Brethren, before we can come to the Rock that yields the water, there must be the sense of need. Do you know what it is that you want? Have you any desire after righteousness and purity and nobleness, and the vision of God flaming in upon the pettinesses and commonplaces of this life which is 'sound and fury, signifying nothing,' and is trivial in all its pretended greatness, unless you have learned that you need God most of all, and will never be at rest till you have Him?

II. Secondly, note here Christ's consciousness of Himself.

Is there anything in human utterances more majestic and wonderful than this saying of my text, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me'? There He claims to be separate altogether from those whose thirst He would satisfy. There He claims to be able to meet every aspiration, every spiritual want, every true desire in this complex nature of ours. There He claims to be able to do this for one, and therefore for all. There He claims to be able to do it for all the generations of mankind, right away down to the end. Who is He who thus plants Himself in the front of the race, knows their deep thirsts, takes account of the impotence of anything created to satisfy them, assumes the divine prerogative, and says, 'I come to satisfy every desire in every soul, to the end of time'? Yes, and from that day when He stood in the Temple and cried these words, down to this day, there have been, and there are, millions who can say, 'We have drawn water from this fountain of salvation, and it has never failed us.' Christ's audacious presentation of Himself to the world as adequate to fill all its needs, and slake all its thirst, has been verified by nineteen centuries of experience, and there are many men and women all over the world to-day who would be ready to set to their seals that Christ is true, and that He, indeed, is all-sufficient for the soul.

Brethren, I do not wish to dwell upon this aspect of our Lord's character in more than a sentence, but I beseech you to ask yourselves what is the impression that is left of the character of a man who says such things, unless He was something more than one of our race? Jesus Christ, it is as clear as day, in these words makes a claim which only divinity can warrant Him in making, or can fulfil when it is made. And I would urge you to consider what the alternative is, if you do not believe that Jesus Christ here sets Himself forth as the Incarnate Word of God, sufficient for all humanity. 'I am meek and lowly in heart'—and His lowliness of heart is proved in a strange fashion, if He stands up before the race and says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'

III. Note, further, Christ's invitation.

'Let him come ... and drink'—two expressions for one thing. That invitation sounds all through Scripture, and, perhaps, there was lingering in our Lord's mind, besides the reference to the rock that yielded the water, some echo of the words of the second Isaiah:

'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' 'Nay!' said Christ, 'not to the waters, but to Me.' And then we hear from His own lips the same invitation addressed to the woman of Samaria, with the difference that to her, an alien, He pointed only to the natural water in the well that had been Jacob's, whereas, to these people, the descendants of the chosen race, He pointed to the miracle in the desert, and claimed to fulfil that. And on the very last page of Scripture, as it is now arranged, there stands the echo again of this saying of my text, 'Let him that is athirst come'—there must be the sense of need, as I was saying, before there is the coming—'and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'

Now, dear friends, beneath these two metaphorical expressions there lies one simple condition. I put it into three words, which, for the sake of being easily remembered, I cast into an alliterative form: approach Christ, appropriate Christ, adhere to Christ.

Approach Christ. You come by faith, you come by love, you come by communion. And you can come if you will, though He is now on the throne.

Appropriate Christ. It is vain that the water should be gushing from the rock there, unless you make it your own by drinking. It must pass your lips. It must become your personal possession. You must enclose a piece of the common, and make it your very own. 'He loved *us*, and gave Himself for *us*'; well and good, but strike out the 'us' and put in 'me.' 'He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.' The river may be flowing right past your door, yet your lips may be cracked with thirst, even whilst you hear the tinkle of its music amongst the sedges and the pebbles. Appropriate Christ. 'Come … and drink.'

Adhere to Christ. You were thirsty yesterday: you drank. That will not slake to-day's thirst, nor prevent its recurrence. And you must keep on drinking if you are to keep from perishing of thirst. Day by day, drop by drop, draught by draught, you must drink. According to the ancient Jewish legend, which Paul in one of his letters refers to, about this very miracle, you must have the Rock following you all through your desert pilgrimage, and you must drink daily and hourly, by continual faith, love, and communion.

IV. We have here not only these points, but a fourth. Christ's promise.

'He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' That is one case of the universal law that a man who trusts Christ becomes like the Christ whom he trusts. Derivatively and by impartation, no doubt, but still the man who has gone to that Rock, to the springing fountain as it pushes forth, receives into himself an inward life by the communication of Christ's divine Spirit, so that he has in him a fountain 'springing up into life everlasting.' The Book of Proverbs says, 'The good man shall be satisfied from himself,' but the good man is only satisfied from himself when he can say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and from that better self he will be satisfied.

So we may have a well in the courtyard, and may be able to bear in ourselves the fountain of water, and where the divine life of Christ by His Spirit has through faith been implanted within us, it will come out from us. There is a question for you Christian people—do any rivers of living water flow out of you? If they do not, it is to be doubted whether you have drunk of the fountain. There are many professing Christians who are like the foul little rivers that pass under the pavements in Manchester, all impure, and covered over so that nobody sees them. 'Out of him shall flow rivers of living water'—that is Christ's way of communicating the blessing of eternal life to the world—by the medium of those

who have already received it. Christian men and women, if your faith has brought the life into you, see to it that approaching Christ, and appropriating Christ, and adhering to Christ, you are becoming assimilated to Christ, and in your daily life, God's grace fructifying through you to all, are 'become as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

'... I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'—JOHN viii. 12.

Jesus Christ was His own great theme. Whatever be the explanation of the fact, there stands the fact that, if we know anything at all about His habitual tone of teaching, we know that it was full of Himself. We know, too, that what He said about Himself was very unlike the language becoming a wise and humble religious teacher. Both the prominence given to His own personality, and the tremendous claims He advances for Himself, are hard to reconcile with any conception of His nature and work except one,—that there we see God manifest in the flesh. Are such words as these fit to be spoken by any man conscious of his own limitations and imperfections of life and knowledge? Would they not be fatal to any one's pretensions to be a teacher of religion or morality? They assert that the Speaker is the Source of illumination for the world; the only Source; the Source for all. They assert that 'following' Him, whether in belief or in deed, is the sure deliverance from all darkness, either of error or of sin; and implants in every follower a light which is life. And the world, instead of turning away from such monstrous assumptions, and drowning them in scornful laughter, or rebelling against them, has listened, and largely believed, and has not felt them to mar the beauty of meekness, which, by a strange anomaly, this Man says that He has.

Words parallel to these are frequent on our Lord's lips. In each instance they have some special appropriateness of application, as is probably the case here. The suggestion has been reasonably made, that there is an allusion in them to part of the ceremonial connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, at which we find our Lord present in the previous chapter. Commentators tell us that on the first evening of the Feast, two huge golden lamps, which stood one on each side of the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court, were lighted as the night began to fall, and poured out a brilliant flood over Temple and city and deep gorge; while far into the midnight, troops of rejoicing worshippers clustered about them with dance and song. The possibility of this reference is strengthened by the note of place which our Evangelist gives. 'These things spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple,' for the 'treasury' stood in the same court, and doubtless the golden lamps were full in sight of the listening groups. It is also strengthened by the unmistakable allusion in the previous chapter to another portion of the ceremonial of the Feast, where our Lord puts forth another of His great self-revelations and demands, in singular parallelism with that of our text, in the words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.' That refers to the custom during the Feast of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, which was poured out on the altar, while the gathered multitude chanted the old strain of Isaiah's prophecy: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' It is to be remembered, too, in estimating the probability of our text belonging to these Temple-sayings at the Feast, that the section which separates it from them, and contains the story about the woman taken in adultery, is judged by the best critics to be out of place here, and is not found in the most valuable manuscripts. If, then, we suppose this allusion to be fairly probable, I think it gives

a special direction and meaning to these grand words, which it may be worth while to think of briefly.

The first thing to notice is—the intention of the ceremonial to which our Lord here points as a symbol of Himself. What was the meaning of these great lights that went flashing through the warm autumn nights of the festival? All the parts of that Feast were intended to recall some feature of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness; the lights by the altar were memorials of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When, then, Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the world,' He would declare Himself as being in reality, and to every soul of man to the end of time, what that cloud with its heart of fire was in outward seeming to one generation of desert wanderers.

Now, the main thing which *it* was to these, was the visible vehicle of the divine presence. 'The Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud.' 'The Lord looked through the pillar.' 'The Lord came down in the cloud and spake with him.' The 'cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared.' Such is the way in which it is ever spoken of, as being the manifestation to Israel in sensible form of the presence among them of God their King. 'The glory of the Lord' has a very specific meaning in the Old Testament. It usually signifies that brightness, the flaming heart of the cloudy pillar, which for the most part, as it would appear, veiled by the cloud, gathered radiance as the world grew darker at set of sun, and sometimes, at great crises in the history, as at the Red Sea, or on Sinai, or in loving communion with the law-giver, or in swift judgment against the rebels, rent the veil and flamed on men's eyes. I need not remind you how this same pillar of cloud and fire, which at once manifested and hid God, was thereby no unworthy symbol of Him who remains, after all revelation, unrevealed. Whatsoever sets forth, must also shroud, the infinite glory. Concerning all by which He makes Himself known to eye, or mind, or heart, it must be said, 'And there was the hiding of His power.' The fire is ever folded in the cloud. Nay, at bottom, the light which is full of glory is therefore inaccessible, and the thick darkness in which He dwells is but the 'glorious privacy' of perfect light.

That guiding pillar, which moved before the moving people—a cloud to shelter from the scorching heat, a fire to cheer in the blackness of night—spread itself above the sanctuary of the wilderness; and 'the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.' When the moving Tabernacle gave place to the fixed Temple, again '*the* cloud filled the house of the Lord'; and there—dwelling between the cherubim, the types of the whole order of creatural life, and above the mercy-seat, that spoke of pardon, and the ark that held the law, and behind the veil, in the thick darkness of the holy of holies, where no feet trod, save once a year one white-robed priest, in the garb of a penitent, and bearing the blood that made atonement—shone the light of the glory of God, the visible majesty of the present Deity.

But long centuries had passed since that light had departed. 'The glory' had ceased from the house that now stood on Zion, and the light from between the cherubim. Shall we not, then, see a deep meaning and reference to that awful blank, when Jesus standing there in the courts of that Temple, whose inmost shrine was, in a most sad sense, empty, pointed to the quenched lamps that commemorated a departed Shechinah, and said, 'I am the Light of the world'?

He is the Light of the world, because in Him is the glory of God. His words are madness, and something very like blasphemy, unless they are vindicated by the visible indwelling in Him of the present God. The cloud of the humanity, 'the veil, that is to say, His flesh,' enfolds and tempers; and through its transparent folds reveals, even while it swathes, the Godhead. Like some fleecy vapour flitting across the sun, and irradiated by its light, it enables our weak eyes to see light, and not darkness, in the else intolerable blaze. Yes! Thou art the Light of the world, because in Thee dwelleth 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Thy servant hath taught us the meaning of Thy words, when he said: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Then, subordinate to this principal thought, is the other on which I may touch for a moment—that Christ, like that pillar of cloud and fire, *guides* us in our pilgrimage. You may remember how emphatically the Book of Numbers (chap. ix.) dwells upon the absolute control of all the marches and halts by the movements of the cloud. When it was taken up, they journeyed; when it settled down, they encamped. As long as it lay spread above the Tabernacle, there they stayed. Impatient eyes might look, and impatient spirits chafe—no matter. The camp might be pitched in a desolate place, away from wells and palm-trees, away from shade, among fiery serpents, and open to fierce foes—no matter. As long as the pillar was motionless, no man stirred. Weary slow days might pass in this compulsory inactivity; but 'whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle, the children of Israel journeyed not.' And whenever It lifted itself up,—no matter how short had been the halt, how weary and footsore the people, how pleasant the resting-place—up with the tent-pegs immediately, and away. If the signal were given at midnight, when all but the watchers slept, or at midday, it was all the same. There was the true Commander of their march. It was not Moses, nor Jethro, with his quick Arab eye and knowledge of the ground, that guided them; but that stately, solemn pillar, that floated before them. How they must have watched for the gathering up of its folds as they lay softly stretched along the Tabernacle roof; and for its sinking down, and spreading itself out, like a misty hand of blessing, as it sailed in the van!

'I am the Light of the world.' We have in Him a better guide through worse perplexities than theirs. By His Spirit within us, by that all-sufficient and perfect example of His life, by the word of His Gospel, and by the manifold indications of His providence, Jesus Christ is our Guide. If ever we go astray, it is not His fault, but ours. How gentle and loving that guidance is, none who have not yielded to it can tell. How wise and sure, none but those who have followed it know. He does not say 'Go,' but 'Come.' When He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them. In all rough places His quick hand is put out to save us. In danger He lashes us to Himself, as Alpine guides do when there is perilous ice to get across. As one of the psalms puts it, with wonderful beauty: 'I will guide thee with Mine eye'—a glance, not a blow—a look of directing love, that at once heartens to duty and tells duty. We must be very near Him to catch that look, and very much in sympathy with Him to understand it; and when we do, we must be swift to obey. Our eyes must be ever toward the Lord, or we shall often be marching on, unwitting that the pillar has spread itself for rest, or idly dawdling in our tents long after the cloud has gathered itself up for the march. Do not let impatience lead you to hasty interpretation of His plans before they are fairly evolved.

Many men by self-will, by rashness, by precipitate hurry in drawing conclusions about what they ought to do, have ruined their lives. Take care, in the old-fashioned phrase, of 'running before you are sent.' There should always be a good clear space between the guiding ark and you, 'about two thousand cubits by measure,' that there may be no mistakes about the road. It is neither reverent nor wise to be treading on the heels of our Guide in our eager confidence that we know where He wants us to go.

Do not let the warmth by the camp-fire, or the pleasantness of the shady place where your tent is pitched, keep you there when the cloud lifts. Be ready for change, be ready for continuance, because you are in fellowship with your Leader and Commander; and let Him say, Go, and you go; Do this, and you gladly do it, until the hour when He will whisper, Come; and, as you come, the river will part, and the journey will be over, and 'the fiery, cloudy pillar,' that 'guided you all your journey through,' will spread itself out an abiding glory, in that higher home where 'the Lamb is the light thereof.'

All true following of Christ begins with faith, or we might almost say that following *is* faith, for we find our Lord substituting the former expression for the latter in another passage of this Gospel parallel with the present. 'I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not walk in darkness.' The two ideas are not equivalent, but faith is the condition of following; and following is the outcome and test, because it is the operation, of faith. None but they who trust Him will follow Him. He who does not follow, does not trust. To follow Christ, means to long and strive after His companionship; as the Psalmist says, 'My soul followeth hard after Thee.' It means the submission of the will, the effort of the whole nature, the daily conflict to reproduce His example, the resolute adoption of His command as my law, His providence as my will, His fellowship as my joy. And the root and beginning of all such following is in coming to Him, conscious of mine own darkness, and trustful in His great light. We must rely on a Guide before we accept His directions; and it is absurd to pretend that we trust Him, if we do not go as He bids us. So 'Follow thou Me' is, in a very real sense, the sum of all Christian duty.

That thought opens out very wide fields, into which we must not even glance now; but I cannot help pausing here to repeat the remark already made, as to the gigantic and incomprehensible self-confidence that speaks here. 'Followeth *Me*'; then Jesus Christ calmly proposes Himself as the aim and goal for every soul of man; sets up His own doings as an all-sufficient rule for us all, with all our varieties of temper, character, culture, and work, and quietly assumes to have a right of precedence before, and of absolute command over, the whole world. They are all to keep *behind* Him, He thinks, be they saints or sages, kings or beggars; and the liker they are to Himself, He thinks, the nearer they will be to perfectness and life. He puts Himself at the head of the mystic march of the generations, and, like the mysterious Angel that Joshua saw in the plain by Jericho, makes the lofty claim: 'Nay, but as *Captain* of the Lord's host am I come up.' Do we admit His claim because we know His Name? Do we yield Him full trust because we have learned that He is the Light of men since He is the Word of God? Do we follow Him with loyal obedience, longing love, and lowly imitation, since He has been and is to us the Saviour of our souls?

In the measure in which we do, the great promises of this wonderful saying will be verified and understood by us—'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness.' That saying has, as one may say, a lower and a higher fulfilment. In the lower, it refers to

practical life and its perplexities. Nobody who has not tried it would believe how many difficulties are cleared out of a man's road by the simple act of trying to follow Christ. No doubt there will still remain obscurities enough as to what we ought to do, to call for the best exercise of patient wisdom; but an enormous proportion of them vanish like mist when the sun breaks through, when once we honestly set ourselves to find out whither the pillared Light is guiding. It is a reluctant will, and intrusive likings and dislikings, that obscure the way for us, much oftener than real obscurity in the way itself. It is seldom impossible to discern the divine will, when we only wish to know it that we may do it. And if ever it is impossible for us, surely that impossibility is like the cloud resting on the Tabernacle—a sign that for the present His will is that we should be still, and wait, and watch.

But there is a higher meaning in the words than even this promise of practical direction. In the profound symbolism of Scripture, especially of this Gospel, 'darkness' is the name for the whole condition of the soul averted from God. So our Lord here is declaring that to follow Him is the true deliverance from that midnight of the soul. There are a darkness of ignorance, a darkness of impurity, a darkness of sorrow; and in that threefold gloom, thickening to a darkness of death, are they enwrapt who follow not the Light. That is the grim, tragical side of this saying, too sad, too awful for our lips to speak much of, and best left in the solemn impressiveness of that one word. But the hopeful, blessed side of it is, that the feeblest beginnings of trust in Jesus Christ, and the first tottering steps that try to tread in His, bring us into the light. It does not need that we have reached our goal, it is enough that our faces are turned to it, and our hearts desire to attain it, then we may be sure that the dominion of the darkness over us is broken. To follow, though it be afar off, and with unequal steps, fills our path with increasing brightness, and even though evil and ignorance and sorrow may thrust their blackness in upon our day, they are melting in the growing glory, and already we may give thanks 'unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.'

But we have not merely the promise that we shall be led by the light and brought into the light. A yet deeper and grander gift is offered here: 'He shall have the light of life.' I suppose that means, not, as it is often carelessly taken to mean, a light which illuminates the life, but, like the similar phrases of this Gospel, 'bread of life,' 'water of life,'—light which is life. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' These two are one in their source, which is Jesus, the Word of God. Of Him we have to say, 'With Thee is the fountain of life, in Thy light shall we see light.' They are one in their deepest nature; the life is the light, and the light the life. And this one gift is bestowed upon every soul that follows Christ. Not only will our outward lives be illumined or guided from without, but our inward being will be filled with the brightness. 'Ye were sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord.'

That pillar of fire remained apart and without. But this true and better Guide of our souls enters in and dwells in us, in all the fulness of His triple gift of life, and light, and love. Within us He will chiefly prove Himself the Guide of our spirits, and will not merely cast His beams on the path of our feet, but will fill and flood us with His own brightness. All light of knowledge, of goodness, of gladness will be ours, if Christ be ours; and ours He surely will be if we follow Him. Let us take heed, lest turning away from Him we follow the will-o'-the-

wisps of our own fancies, or the dancing lights, born of putrescence, that flicker above the swamps, for they will lead us into doleful lands where evil things haunt, and into outer darkness. Let us take heed how we use that light of God; for Christ, like His symbol of old, has a double aspect according to the eye which looks. 'It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.' He is either a Stone of stumbling or a sure Foundation, a savour of life or of death, and which He is depends on ourselves. Trusted, loved, followed, He is light. Neglected, turned from, He is darkness. Though He be the Light of the world, it is only the man who follows Him to whom He can give the light of life. Therefore, man's awful prerogative of perverting the best into the worst forced Him, who came to be the light of men, to that sad and solemn utterance: 'For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

THREE ASPECTS OF FAITH

'Many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him….'—JOHN viii. 30,31.

The Revised Version accurately represents the original by varying the expression in these two clauses, retaining 'believed on Him' in the former, and substituting the simple 'believed Him' in the latter. The variation in two contiguous clauses can scarcely be accidental in so careful a writer as the Apostle John. And the reason and meaning of it are obvious enough on the face of the narrative. His purpose is to distinguish between more and less perfect acceptance of Jesus Christ. The more perfect is the former, 'they believed on Him'; the less perfect is the latter, the simple acceptance of His word on His claim of Messiahship, which is stigmatised as shallow, and proved to be transient by the context.

They were 'Jews' which believed, and they continued to be so whilst they were believing. Now, the word 'Jew' in this Gospel always connotes antagonism to Jesus Christ; and as for these persons, how slight and unreliable their adhesion to the Lord is, comes out in the course of the next few verses; and by the end of the chapter they are taking up stones to stone Him. So John would show us that there is a kind of acceptance which may be real, and may be the basis of something much better hereafter, but which, if it does not grow, rots and disappears; and he would draw a broad line of distinction between that and the other mental act, far deeper, more wholesome, more lasting and vital, which he designates as 'believing *on* Him.' I take these words, then, for consideration, not so much to deal with other thoughts suggested by them, as because they afford me a starting-point for the consideration of the various phases of the act of believing, its blessings and its nature, and its relation to its objects, which are expressed in the New Testament by the various grammatical connections and constructions of this word.

Now, the facts with which I wish to deal may be very briefly stated. There are three ways in which the New Testament represents the act of believing, and its relation to its Object, Christ. These three are, first, the simple one which appears in the text as 'believed Him.' Then there is a second, which appears in two forms, slightly different, but which, for our purpose, may be treated as substantially the same—'believing on Him.' And then there is a third, which, literally and accurately translated is, 'believing unto' or 'into Him.' That phrase is John's favourite one, and rather unfortunately, though perhaps necessarily, it has been generally rendered by our translators by the less forcible 'believing in,' which gives the idea of repose in, but does not give the idea of motion towards. These three, then, I think, do set forth, if we will ponder them, very large lessons as to the essence of this act of believing, as to the Object upon which it fastens, and as to the blessings which flow from it, which it will be worth our while to consider now. I may cast the whole into the shape of three exhortations: believe Him, believe on Him, believe unto Him.

I. First, then, believe Christ.

We accept a man's words when we trust the man. Even if belief, or faith, is represented in the New Testament, as it very rarely is, as having for its object the words of revelation, behind that acceptance of the words lies confidence in the person speaking. And the beginning of all true Christian faith has in it, not merely the intellectual acceptance of certain propositions as true, but a confidence in the veracity of Him by whom they are made known to us—even Jesus Christ our Lord.

I do not need to insist upon that at any length here—it would take me away from my present purpose; but what I do wish to emphasise is, that from the very starting-point, the smallest germ of the most rudimentary and imperfect faith which knits a soul to Jesus Christ has Him for its Object, and is thus distinguished from the mere acceptance of truths which, on other grounds than the authority of the speaker, may legitimately commend themselves to a man.

Then believe Him. Now, that breaks up into two thoughts, which are all that I intend to deduce from it now, although many more might be suggested. The one is this, that the least and the lowest that Jesus Christ asks from us is the entire and unhesitating acceptance of His utterances as final, conclusive, and absolutely true. Whatever more Jesus Christ may be, He is, by His life and words, the Communicator of divine and certain truth. He is a Teacher, though He is a great deal more. And whatever more Christian faith may be—and it is a great deal more—it requires, at least, the frank and full recognition of the authority of every word that comes from His lips. A Christianity without a creed is a dream. Bones without flesh are very dry, no doubt; but what about flesh without bones? An inert, shapeless mass. You will never have a vigorous and true Christian life if it is to be moulded according to the fantastic dream of these latter days, which tells us that we may take Jesus as the Guide of our conduct and need not mind about what He says to us. 'Believe Me' is His requirement. The words of His mouth, and the revelations which He has made in the sweetness of His life, and in all the graciousness of His dealings, are the very unveiling to man of absolute and final and certain truth.

But then, on the other hand, let us remember that, while all this is most clear and distinct in the teaching of Scripture, it carries us but a very short way. We find, in the instance from which we take our starting-point in this sermon, the broad distinction drawn, and practically illustrated in the conduct of the persons concerned, between the simple acceptance of what Christ says, and a true faith that clings to Him for evermore. And the same kind of disparagement of the lower process of merely accepting His word is found more than once in connection with the same phrases. We find, for instance, the two which are connected in our texts used in a previous conversation between our Lord and His antagonists. When He says to them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' they reply, dragging down His claim to a lower level, 'What sign showest Thou, that we may see, and believe Thee?' He demanded belief *on* Himself; they answer, 'We are ready to *believe you*, on condition that we see something that may make the rendering of our belief a logical necessity for us.'

Let us lay to heart the rudimentary and incomplete character of a faith which simply accepts the teaching of Jesus Christ, and does no more. The notion that orthodoxy is Christianity, that a man who does not contradict the teaching of the New Testament is thereby a Christian, is a very old and very perilous and very widespread one. There are

many of us who have no better claim to be called Christians than this, that we never denied anything that Jesus Christ said, though we are not sufficiently interested in it, I was going to say, even to deny it. This rudimentary faith, which contents itself with the acceptance of the truth revealed, hardens into mere formalism, or liquefies into mere careless indifference as to the very truth that it professes to believe. There is nothing more impotent than creeds which lie dormant in our brains, and have no influence upon our lives. I wonder how many readers of this sermon, who fancy themselves good Christians, do with their creed as the Japanese used to do with their Emperor—keep him in a palace behind bamboo screens, and never let him do anything, whilst all the reality of power was possessed by another man, who did not profess to be a king at all. Do you think you are Christians because you would sign thirty-nine or three hundred and ninety articles of Christianity, if they were offered to you, while there is not one of them that influences either your thinking or your conduct? Do not let us have these 'sluggish kings,' with a mayor of the place to do the real government, but set on the throne of your hearts the principles of your religion, and see to it that all your convictions be translated into practice, and all your practice be informed by your convictions.

This belief in a set of dogmas, on the authority of Jesus Christ, about which dogmas we do not care a rush, and which make no difference upon our lives, is the faith about which James has so many hard things to say; and he ventures upon a parallel that I should not like to venture on unless I were made bold by his example: 'Thou believest, O vain man! thou doest well: the devils also believe, and'—better than you, in that their belief does something for them, they 'believe—and *tremble*!' But what shall we say about a man who professes himself a disciple, and neither trembles, nor thrills, nor hopes, nor dreads, nor desires, nor does any single thing because of his creed? Believe Jesus, but do not stop there.

II. Believe on Christ.

Now, as I have remarked already, and as many of you know, there is a slightly different, twofold form of this phrase in Scripture. I need not trouble you with the minute distinction between the one and the other. Both forms coincide in the important point on which I wish to touch. That representation of believing on Christ carries us away at once from the mere act of acceptance of His word on His authority to the far more manifestly voluntary, moral, and personal act of reliance upon Him. The metaphor is expanded in various ways in Scripture, and instead of offering any thoughts of my own about it, I would simply ask attention to three of the forms in which it is set forth in the Old and in the New Testaments.

The first of them, and the one which we may regard as governing the others, is that found in the words of Isaiah, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a sure Foundation'; and, as the Apostle Peter comments, 'He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.' There the thoughts presented are the superposition of the building upon its Foundation, the rest of the soul, and the rearing of the life on the basis of Jesus Christ.

How much that metaphor says to us about Him as the Foundation, in all the aspects in which we can apply that term! He is the Basis of our hope, the Guarantee of our security, the Foundation-stone of our beliefs, the very Ground on which our whole life reposes, the Source of our tranquillity, the Pledge of our peace. All that I think, feel, desire, wish, and do, ought to be rested upon that dear Lord, and builded on Him by simple faith. By patient

persistence of effort rearing up the fabric of my life firmly upon Him, and grafting every stone of it—if I might so use the metaphor—into the bedding-stone, which is Christ, I shall be strong, peaceful, and pure.

The storm comes, the waters rise, the winds howl, the hail and the rain 'sweep away the refuge of lies,' and the dwellers in these frail and foundationless houses are hurrying in wild confusion from one peak to another, before the steadily rising tide. But he that builds on that Foundation 'shall not make haste,' as Isaiah has it; shall not need to hurry to shift his quarters before the flood overtake him; shall look out serene upon all the hurtling fury of the wild storm, and the rise of the sullen waters. So, reliance on Christ, and the honest making of Him the Basis, not of our hopes only, but of our thinkings and of our doings, and of our whole being, is the secret of security, and the pledge of peace.

Then there is another form of the same phrase, 'believing on,' in which is suggested not so much the figure of building upon a foundation, as of some feeble man resting upon a strong stay, or clinging to an outstretched and mighty arm. The same metaphor is implied in the word 'reliance.' We lean upon Christ when, forsaking all other props, and realising His sufficiency and sweetness, we rest the whole weight of our weariness and all the impotence of our weakness upon His strong and unwearied arm, and so are saved. All other stays are like that one to which the prophet compares the King of Egypt—the papyrus reed in the Nile stream, on which, if a man leans, it will break into splinters which will go into his flesh, and make a poisoned wound. But if we lean on Christ, we lean on a brazen wall and an iron pillar, and anything is possible sooner than that that stay shall give.

There is still another form of the metaphor, in which neither building upon a foundation, nor leaning upon a support which is thought of as below what rests upon it, are suggested, but rather the hanging upon something firm and secure which is above what hangs from it. The same picture is suggested by our word 'dependence.' 'As a nail fastened in a sure place,' said one of the prophets, 'on Him shall hang all the glory of His Father's house.'

'Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.'

The rope lowered over the cliffs supports the adventurous bird-nester in safety above the murmuring sea. They who clasp Christ's hand outstretched from above, may swing over the deepest, most vacuous abyss, and fear no fall.

So, brother, build on Christ, rely on Him, depend on Him, and it shall not be in vain. But if you will not build on the sure Foundation, do not wonder if the rotten one gives way. If you will not lean on the strong Stay, complain not when the weak one crumbles to dust beneath your weight. And if you choose to swing over the profound depth at the end of a piece of pack-thread, instead of holding on by an adamantine chain wrapped round God's throne, you must be prepared for its breaking and your being smashed to pieces below.

III. The last exhortation that comes out of this comparative study of these phrases is—Believe into Christ.

That is a very pregnant and remarkable expression, and it can scarcely, as you see, be rendered into our language without a certain harshness; but still it is worth while to face the harshness for the sake of getting the double signification that is involved in it. For when we speak of believing unto or into Him, we suggest two things, both of which, apparently,

were in the minds of the writers of the New Testament. One is motion towards, and the other is repose in, that dear Lord.

So, then, true Christian faith is the flight of the soul towards Christ. Therein is one of the special blessednesses of the Christian life, that it has for its object and aim absolutely infinite and unattainable completeness and glory, so that unwearied freshness, inexhaustible buoyancy, endless progress, are the dower of every spirit that truly trusts in Christ. All other aims and objects are limited, transient, and will be left behind. Every other landmark will sink beneath the horizon, where so many of our landmarks have sunk already, and where they will all disappear when the last moment comes. But we may have, and if we are Christian people we shall have, bright before us, sufficiently certain of being reached to make our efforts hopeful and confident, sufficiently certain of never being reached to make our efforts blessed with endless aspirations, the great light and love of that dear Lord, to yearn after whom is better than to possess all besides, and following hard after whom, even in the very motion there is rest, and in the search there is finding. Religion is the flight of the soul, the aspiration of the whole man after the unattainable Attainable—'that I may know Him, and be found in Him.'

Oh, how such thoughts ought to shame us who call ourselves Christians! Growth, progress, getting nearer to Christ, yearning ever with a great desire after Him!—do not the words seem irony when applied to most of us? Think of the average type of sluggish contentment with present attainments that marks Christian people—tortoises in their crawling rather than eagles in their flight. And let us take our portion of shame, and remember that the faith which believes Him, and that which believes on Him, both need to be crowned and perfected by that which believes towards Him, of which the motto is, 'Forgetting the things that are behind, I reach forward to the things that are before.'

But there is another side to this last phase of faith. That true believing towards or unto Christ is the rest of the soul in Him. By faith that deep and most real union of the believing soul with Jesus Christ is effected which may be fitly described as our entrance into and abode in Him. The believer is as if incorporated into Him in whom he believes. Indeed, the Apostle ventures to use a more startling expression than *incorporation* when he says that 'he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.' If by faith we press towards, by faith we shall be in, Christ. Faith is at once motion and rest, search and finding, desire and fruition. The felicity of this last form of the phrase is its expression of both these ideas, which are united in fact as in word. A rare construction of the verb *to believe*, with the simple preposition *in*, coincides with this part of the meaning of *believing unto* or *into*, and need not be separately considered.

With this understanding of its meaning, we see how natural is John's preference for this construction. For surely, if he has anything to tell us, it is that the true Christian life is a life enclosed, as it were, in Jesus Christ. Nor need I remind you how Paul, though he starts from a different point of view, yet coincides with John in this teaching. For, to him, to be 'in Christ' is the sum of all blessedness, righteousness, peace, and power. As in an atmosphere, we may dwell in Him. He may be the strong Habitation to which we may continually resort. One of the Old Testament words for trusting means taking refuge, and such a thought is naturally suggested by this New Testament form of expression. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me.' In that Fortress we dwell secure.

To be in Jesus, wedded to Him by the conjunction of will and desire, wedded to Him in the oneness of a believing spirit and in the obedience of a life, to be thus in Christ is the crown and climax of faith, and the condition of all perfection. To be in Christ is life; to be out of Him is death. In Him we have redemption; in Him we have wisdom, truth, peace, righteousness, hope, confidence. To be in Him is to be in heaven. We enter by faith. Faith is not the acceptance merely of His Word, but is the reliance of the soul on Him, the flight of the soul towards Him, the dwelling of the soul in Him. 'Come, My people, into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee … until the indignation be overpast.'

'NEVER IN BONDAGE'

'We… were never in bondage to any man: how gayest Thou, Ye shall be made free!'—JOHN viii. 33.

'Never in bondage to any man'? Then what about Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Syria? Was there not a Roman garrison looking down from the castle into the very Temple courts where this boastful falsehood was uttered? It required some hardihood to say, 'Never in bondage to any man,' in the face of such a history, and such a present. But was it not just an instance of the strange power which we all have and exercise, of ignoring disagreeable facts, and by ingenious manipulation taking the wrinkles out of the photograph? The Jews were perhaps not misunderstanding Jesus Christ quite so much as these words may suggest. If He had been promising, as they chose to assume, political and external liberty, I fancy they would have risen to the bait a little more eagerly than they did to His words.

But be that as it may, this strange answer of theirs suggests that power of ignoring what we do not want to see, not only in the way in which I have suggested, but also in another. For if they had any inkling of what Jesus meant by slavery and freedom, they, by such words as these, put away from themselves the thought that they were, in any deep and inward sense, bondsmen, and that a message of liberty had any application to them. Ah, dear friends! there was a great deal of human nature in these men, who thus put up a screen between them and the penetrating words of our Lord. Were they not doing just what many of us—all of us to some extent—do: ignoring the facts of their own necessities, of their own spiritual condition, denying the plain lessons of experience? Like them, are not we too often refusing to look in the face the fact that we all, apart from Him, are really in bondage? Because we do not realise the slavery, are we not indifferent to the offer of freedom? 'We were never in bondage'; consequently we add, 'How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?' So then, my text brings us to think of three things: our bondage, our ignorance of our bondage, our consequent indifference to Christ's offer of liberty. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

First as to—

I. Our bondage.

Christ follows the vain boast in the text, with the calm, grave, profound explanation of what He meant: 'Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin.' That is true in two ways. By the act of sinning a man shows that he is the slave of an alien power that has captured him; and in the act of sinning, he rivets the chains and increases the tyranny. He is a slave, or he would not obey sin. He is more a slave because he has again obeyed it. Now, do not let us run away with the idea that when Jesus speaks of sin and its bondage, He is thinking only, or mainly, of gross outrages and contradictions of the plain law of morality and decency, that He is thinking only of external acts which all men brand as being wrong, or of those which law qualifies as crimes. We have to go far deeper than that, and into a far more inward region of life than that, before we come to apprehend the inwardness and the depth

of the Christian conception of what sin is. We have to bring our whole life close up against God, and then to judge its deeds thereby. Therefore, though I know I am speaking to a mass of respectable, law-abiding people, very few of you having any knowledge of the grosser and uglier forms of transgression, and I dare say none of you having any experience of what it is to sin against human law, though I do not charge you—God forbid!—with *vices*, and still less with *crimes*, I bring to each man's conscience a far more searching word than either of these two, when I say, 'We all have *sinned* and come short of the glory of God.' This declaration of the universality and reality of the bondage of sin is only the turning into plain words of a fact which is of universal experience, though it may be of a very much less universal consciousness. We may not be aware of the fact, because, as I have to show you, we do not direct our attention to it. But there it is; and the truth is that every man, however noble his aspirations sometimes, however pure and high his convictions, and however honest in the main may be his attempts to do what is right, when he deals honestly with himself, becomes more or less conscious of just that experience which a great expert in soul analysis and self-examination made: 'I find a law'—an influence working upon my heart with the inevitableness and certainty of law—'that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'

We all know that, whether we regard it as we ought or no. We all say Amen to that, when it is forced upon our attention. There *is* something in us that thwarts aspiration towards good, and inclines to evil.

'What will but felt the fleshly screen?'

And it is not only a screen. It not only prevents us from rising as high as we would, but it sinks us so low as to do deeds that something within us recoils from and brands as evil. Jesus teaches us that he who commits sin is the slave of sin; that is to say, that an alien power has captured and is coercing the wrongdoer. That teaching does not destroy responsibility, but it kindles hope. A foreign foe, who has invaded the land, may be driven out of the land, and all his prisoners set free, if a stronger than he comes against him. Christianity is called gloomy and stern, because it preaches the corruption of man's heart. Is it not a gospel to draw a distinction between the evil that a man does, and the self that a man may be? Is it not better, more hopeful, more of a true evangel, to say to a man, 'Sin dwelleth in you,' than to say, 'What is called sin is only the necessary action of human nature'? To believe that their present condition is not slavery makes men hopeless of ever gaining freedom, and the true gospel of the emancipation of humanity rests on the Christian doctrine of the bondage of sin.

Let me remind you that freedom consists not in the absence of external constraints, but in the animal in us being governed by the will, for when the flesh is free the man is a slave. And it means that the will should be governed by the conscience; and it means that the conscience should be governed by God. These are the stages. Men are built in three stories, so to speak. Down at the bottom, and to be kept there, are inclinations, passions, lust, desires, all which are but blind aimings after their appropriate satisfaction, without any question as to whether the satisfaction is right or wrong; and above that a dominant will which is meant to control, and above that a conscience. That is the pyramid; and as by the sunshine on the gilded top of some spire, the shining apex, the conscience, is illnmined

when the light of God falls upon it. And when a man is built in that fashion, and keeps to that fashion, then, and only then, is he free.

I need not remind you of how the metaphor of my text receives its most tragical and yet most common illustration and confirmation in the awful fact of the power of any evil thing, once thought or done by a man, to reproduce itself, onwards and ever onwards. It is a far commoner thing for a man never to have done some given evil, never to have got drunk, never to have stolen, or the like, than to have done it only once. I have heard of a mysterious illness, in which at first medical analysis detected with difficulty one single bacterion in a great quantity of blood. But in a few days, so had they multiplied that no drop could be taken anywhere from the veins which was not full of them. That is how men get under the slavery of any evil thing; and habit becomes stronger than anything except that "strong Son of God, immortal Love," whose Spirit can conquer even it." Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye that are wont to do evil learn to do well." The bondage is real and hard.

My text suggests to us that strange, sad fact-

II. OUR IGNORANCE OF OUR SLAVERY.

"We were never in bondage to any man," said the Jews. We are but too apt to repeat the empty boast, and as they forgot Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus,and Cesar, we forget our failures, our faults, our sins. We ignore them. Is not that, too, a plain fact of experience? A sadly large percentage of men never have really opened their eyes to the undeniable truth that sin has dominion over them. They go along on the surface of things, keeping to the shallows of human life, occupying themselves with their various duties and enjoyments, and they never know, just because they shut their eyes to facts, or rather turn their eyes away from facts-what is their real condition in God's sight. Some of my present hearers are, in regard to this matter, what the old Puritans used to call "Gospel-hardened." They have their hearts and minds, I was going to say water-proofed, by repeated application to them, as I am trying to apply them now, of truths which but add one more film to the layers between their hearts and the Gospel. Because they are so familiar with the words of our message, they all but lose the faculty of bringing its power into contact with themselves. Oh! if I could overcome that tendency which there is in all regular church and chapel-goers to make themselves comfortable in their corners, and suppose that the man in the pulpit is saying what he ought to say, and that they need not give much heed to his message because they have heard it all before-if I could once get the sharp point of this great Christian truth of our slavery under sin, through the manifold layers with which your heart is encrusted, you would find out the weight of a good many things that some of you think very phantasmal and of little consequence.

There is nothing about us that is more remarkable and more awful, when you come to think of it, than the power that we have, by not attending to something, of making that something practically non-existent. The great search-lights, that they now have on battleships, will fling a beam of terrible revealing power on one sma11 segment of the vast circle of the sea; and all the rest, though it may be filled with the enemy's fleet, will be lying in darkness. So just because we cannot get you to think of the facts of your slavery to sin, the facts are non-existent as far as you are concerned. Let me plead with you. Surely!

sure1y, it is not a thing worthy of a man never to go down into the deep places of your own hearts and see the ugly things that coil and wrestle and swarm and multiply there! Ezekiel was once led to a place where, through a hole broken in the wall, there was showed him an inner chamber, on the walls of which were painted the hideous idols of the heathen. And there, in the presence of the foul shapes, stood venerable priests and official dignitaries of Israel, with their censers in their hands, and their backs to the oracle of God. There is a chamber like that in all our hearts; and it would be a great deal better that we should go down, through the hole in the wall, and see it, than that we should live, as so many of us do, in this fool's paradise of ignorance of our own sin. It is because we will not attend to the facts that we ignore the facts. The evils that we do, and that we cherish undone in our hearts, are like the wreckers on some stormy coast, that begin operations by taking the tongue out of the bell that hangs on the buoy, and putting out the light that beams from the beacon. Sin chokes conscience; and so the worse a man is, the less he feels himself to be bad; and while a saint will be tortured with agonies of remorse for some slight peccadillo, a brigand will add a murder or two to his list, and wipe his mouth and say, "I have done no harm." We are ignorant of our sin because we bribe our consciences, because we drug our consciences, because we will not attend to the facts of our own spiritual being.

That ignorance of our bondage is characteristic of the tone of mind of this generation. Things have changed in that respect, as in a great many others, since I was a boy. I do not hear now, from people who desire to unite themselves to Jesus Christ, the deep poignant penitence and confession of sin that one used to hear. I do not hear the facts of sin, its gravity and universality, preached from pulpits in the way it used to be. I notice in the ordinary, average man a tendency to think more about environment and heredity, than about individidual responsibility, and on the whole a very much lowered sense of the depth and the power and the universality of transgression. And that is why, to a large extent, the Christianity of this generation is so shallow a thing as it is.

That brings me, lastly, to say a word about-

III. THE CONSEQUENT INDIFFERENCE TO CHRIST'S OFFER OF FREEDOM.

"How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" Of course, if they had no consciousness of bondage, there was no attraction for them in a promise of freedom.

That remark opens out two thoughts, on which I do not dwell. First, the ignoring of the fact of sin which is so common amongst us all to-day, makes it impossible to understand Christ and Christianity. Brethren, that great Gospel, and that great Lord who is the subject of the Gospel, have many other aspects than this. But this is the central thought as to it and Him, that it is the emancipation from sin, because He is the Emancipator. "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach deliverance to the captives." And wherever we find, as we do find, in many quarters to-day, that the central fact of Christianity, the Death for the sin of the world, is deposed from its place, there the life-blood is ebbing out of the Gospel. Historically, the beginning of almost all heresies has been the under-estimate of the fact of sin. As long as you dwell in the shallows of human experience, a shallow Christianity and a shallow Christ will be enough for you. But when once you get to understand the depths of your own need, and the depths of your brother's need, then nothing less than the Christ that died to solve the problem, insoluble else, of how

to emancipate the soul and the world from the tyranny of sin, will be enough for you. Once "the waters of the great deep are broken up," and the floods are out, there is nothing for it but the Ark. It is not enough then to speak of a human Christ; it is not enough, when a man's conscience has been roused, not to exaggeration, but to clear sight, of what he is-it is not enough then to speak of an example Christ, or of a teaching Christ. Ah! we want more than that. We want "that which first of all I delivered unto you, how that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures."

And, brethren, just as the ignoring of the fact of sin makes the understanding of Christ and His word impossible, so it makes real reception of Him for ourselves impossible. Many men are brought near to Jesus by other roads; thank God for it! There are a thousand ways to the Cross, but it is the Cross that we must clasp if in any true sense we are to clasp Christ. And there is all the difference between the superficial, partial, and easy-going profession of Christianity which is so common amongst us to-day, and the life and death clutching and clinging to Him which comes when, and only when, a man feels that the tyrant whom he served as a slave, is close behind him, and that his only chance of freedom is to hold fast by the horns of the altar of the Sanctuary, and to cleave to the Christ in Whom, and in Whom alone, we are free indeed.

ONE METAPHOR AND TWO MEANINGS

'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.'—JOHN ix. 4.

'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.'—ROMANS xiii. 12.

The contrast between these two sayings will strike you at once. Using the same metaphors, they apply them in exactly opposite directions. In the one, life is the day, and the state beyond death the night; in the other, life is the night, and the state beyond death the day. Remarkable as the contrast is, it comes to be still more so if we remember the respective speakers. For each of them says what we should rather have expected the other to say. It would have been natural for Paul to have given utterance to the stimulus to diligence caused by the consciousness that the time of work was brief; and it would have been as natural for Jesus, who, as we believe, came from God, from the place of the eternal supernal glory, to have said that life here was night as compared with the illumination that He had known. But it is the divine Master who gives utterance to the common human consciousness of a brief life ending in inactivity, and it is the servant who takes the higher point of view.

So strange did the words of my first text seem as coming from our Lord's lips, that the sense of incongruity seems to have been the occasion of the remarkable variation of reading which the Revised Version has adopted when it says '*We* must work the works of Him that sent Me.' But that thought seems to me to be perfectly irrelevant to our Lord's purpose in this context, where He is vindicating His own action, and not laying down the duty of His servants. He is giving here one of these glimpses, that we so rarely get, into His own inmost heart. And so we have to take the sharp contrast between the Master's thought and the servant's thought, and to combine them, if we would think rightly about the present and the future, and do rightly in the present.

I. Let me ask you to look at the Master's thought about the present and the future.

As I have already said, our Lord gives utterance here to the very common, in fact, universal human consciousness. The contrast between the intense little spot of light and the great ring of darkness round about it; between 'the warm precincts of the cheerful day' and the cold solitudes of the inactive night has been the commonplace and stock-in-trade of moralists and thoughtful men from the beginning; has given pathos to poetry, solemnity to our days; and has been the ally of base as well as of noble things. For to say to a man, 'there are twelve hours in the day of life, and then comes darkness, the blackness that swallows up all activity,' may either be made into a support of all lofty and noble thoughts, or, by the baser sort, may be, and has been, made into a philosophy of the 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die' kind; 'Gather ye roses while ye may'; 'A short life and a merry one.' The thought stimulates to diligence, but it does nothing to direct the diligence. It makes men work furiously, but it never will prevent them from working basely. 'Whatsoever thy hand

findeth to do, do it with thy might,' is a conclusion from the consideration that 'there is neither wisdom nor knowledge nor device in the grave whither we go,' but what the hand should find to do must be settled from altogether different considerations.

Our Lord here takes the common human point of view, and says, 'Life is the time for activity, and it must be the more diligent because it is ringed by the darkness of the night.' What precisely does our Lord intend by His use of that metaphor of the night? No figures, we know, run upon all-fours. The point of comparison may be simply in some one feature common to the two things compared, and so all sorts of mischief may be done by trying to extend the analogy to other features. Now, there are a great many points in which day and night may respectively be taken as analogues of Life and Death and the state beyond death. There is a 'night of weeping'; there is a 'night of ignorance.' But our Lord Himself tells us what is the one point of comparison which alone is in His mind, when He says, 'The night cometh, when no man can work.' It is simply the night as a season of compulsory inactivity that suggests the comparison in our text. And so we have here the presentation of that dear Lord as influenced by the common human motive, and feeling that there was work to be done which must be crowded into a definite space, because when that space was past, there would be no more opportunity for the work to be done.

Look at how, in the words of my first text, we have, as I said, a glimpse into His inmost heart. He lets us see that all His life was under the solemn compulsion of that great *must* which was so often upon His lips, that He felt that He was here to do the Father's will, and that that obligation lay upon Him with a pressure which He neither could, nor would if He could, have got rid of.

There are two kinds of 'musts' in our lives. There is the unwelcome necessity which grips us with iron and sharpened fangs; the needs-be which crushes down hopes and dreams and inclinations, and forces the slave to his reluctant task. And there is the 'must' which has passed into the will, into the heart, and has moulded the inmost desire to conformity with the obligation which no more stands over against us as a taskmaster with whip and chain, but has passed within us and is there an inspiration and a joy. He that can say, as Jesus Christ in His humanity could, and did say: 'My meat'—the refreshment of my nature, the necessary sustenance of my being—'is to do the will of my Father'; that man, and that man alone, feels no pressure that is pain from the incumbency of the necessity that blessedly rules His life. When 'I will' and 'I choose' coincide, like two of Euclid's triangles atop of one another, line for line and angle for angle, then comes liberty into the life. He that can say, not with a knitted brow and an unwilling ducking of his head to the yoke, 'I must do it,' but can say, 'Thy law is within my heart,' that is the Christlike, the free, the happy man.

Further, our Lord here, in His thoughts of the present and the future, lets us see what He thought that the work of God in the world was. The disciples looked at the blind man sitting by the wayside, and what he suggested to them was a curious, half theological, half metaphysical question, in which Rabbinical subtlety delighted. 'Who did sin, this man or his parents?' They only thought of talking over the theological problem involved in the fact that, before he had done anything in this world to account for the calamity, he was *born* blind. Jesus Christ looked at the man, and He did not think about theological cobwebs. What was suggested to Him was to fight against the evil and abolish it. It is sometimes necessary to discuss the origin of an evil thing, of a sorrow or a sin, in order to understand how to

deal with and get rid of it. But unless that is the case, our first business is not to say, 'How comes this about?' but our business is to take steps to make it cease to come about. Cure the man first and then argue to your heart's content about what made him blind, but cure him first. And so Jesus Christ taught us that the meaning of the day of life was that we should set ourselves to abolish the works of the devil, and that the work of God was that we should fight against sin and sorrow, and in so far as it was in our power, abolish these, in all the variety of their forms, in all the vigour of their abundant growth. Sorrow and sin are God's call to every one of His sons and daughters to set themselves to cast them out of His fair creation; and 'the day' is the opportunity for doing that.

Our Lord here, as I have already suggested, shows us very touchingly and beautifully, how entirely He bore our human nature, and had entered into our conditions, in that He, too, felt that common human emotion, and was spurred to unhasting and yet unresting diligence by the thought of the coming of the night. I suppose that although we have few chronological data in this Gospel of John, the hour of our Lord's death was really very near at that time. He had just escaped from a formidable attempt upon His life. 'They took up stones to stone Him, but He, passing through the midst of them, went His way,' is the statement which immediately precedes the account of His meeting with this blind man. And so under the pressure, perhaps, of that immediate experience which revealed the depths of hatred that was ready for anything against Him, He gives utterance to this expression: 'If it be the case that the time is at hand, then the more need that, Sabbath day as it is, I should pause here.' Though the multitude were armed with stones to stone Him, He stopped in His flight because there was a poor blind man there whom He felt that He needed to cure. Beautiful it is, and drawing Him very near to us,—and it should draw us very near to Him—that thus He shared in that essentially human consciousness of the limitation of the power to work, by the ring of blackness that encircled the little spot of illuminated light.

But some will say, 'How is it possible that such a consciousness as this should really have been in the mind of Jesus Christ?' 'Did He not know that His death was not to be the end of His work? Did He not know, and say over and over again, in varying forms, that when He passed from earth, it was not into inactivity? Is it not the very characteristic of His mission that it is different from that of all other helpers and benefactors and teachers of the world, in that His death stands in the very middle of His work, and that on the one side of it there is activity, and on the other side of it there is still, and in some sense loftier and greater, activity?' Yes; all that is perfectly true, and I do not for a moment believe that our Lord was forgetting that the life on the earth was but the first volume of His biography, and of the records of His deeds, and that He contemplated them, as He contemplated always, the life beyond, as working in and on and over and through His servants, even unto the end of the world.

But you have only to remember the difference between the earthly and the heavenly life of the Lord fully to understand the point of view that He takes here. The one is the basis of the other; the one is the seedtime, the other is the harvest. The one has only the limited years of the earthly life, in which it can be done; the other has the endless years of Eternity, through which it is to be continued. And if any part of that earthly life of the Lord had been void of its duty, and of its discharge of the Father's will, not even He, amidst the blaze of the heavenly glory, could have thereafter filled up the tiny gap. All the earthly years were

needed to be filled with service, up to the great service and sacrifice of the Cross, in order that upon them might be reared the second stage and phase of His heavenly life. With regard to the one, He said on the Cross, 'It is finished.' But when He died He passed not into the night of inactivity, but into the day of greater service. And that higher and heavenly form of His work continues, and not until 'the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ,' and the whole benefit and effect of His earthly life are imparted to the whole race of man, will it be said, 'It is done,' and the angels of heaven proclaim the completion of His work for man. But seeing that that work has its twofold forms, Jesus, like us, had to be conscious of the limitations of life, and of the night that followed the day.

II. And now turn, in the second place, to the servant's thought.

As I have already pointed out, it is the precise reversal of the other. What to Christ is 'day' to Paul is 'night.' What to Christ is 'night' to Paul is 'day.' Now the first point that I would make is this, that the future would never have been 'day' to Paul if Jesus had not gone down into the darkness of the 'night.' I have said that there was only one point of comparison in our Lord's mind between night and death. But we may venture to extend the figure a little, and to say that the Light went into the 'valley of the shadow of Death,' and lit it up from end to end. The Life went into the palace of Death, and breathed life into all there. There is a great picture by one of the old monkish masters, on the walls of a Florentine convent, which represents the descent of Jesus to that dim region of the dead. Around Him there is a halo of light that shines into the gloomy corridor, up which the thronging patriarchs and saints of the Old Dispensation are coming, with outstretched hands of eager welcome and acceptance, to receive the blessing. Ah! it is true, 'the people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light; and to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, unto them hath the Light shined.' Christ the Light has gone down into the darkness, and what to Him was night He has made for us day. Just as Scripture all but confines the name of *death* to Christ's experience upon the Cross, and by virtue of that experience softens it down for the rest of us into the blessed image of *sleep*, so the Master has turned the night of death into the dawning of the day.

Further, to the servant the brightness of that future day dimmed all earth's garish glories into darkness. It was because Paul saw the Beyond flaming with such lustre that the nearer distance to him seemed to have sunk into gloom. Just as a man or other object between you and the western sky when the sun is there will be all dark, so earth with heaven behind it becomes a mere shadowy outline. The day that is beyond outshines all the lustres and radiances of earth, and turns them into darkness. You go into a room out of blazing tropical sunshine, and it is all gloom and obscurity. He whose eyes are fixed on the day that is to come will find that here he walks as one in the night.

And the brightness of that day, as well as the darkness of the present night, directed the servant as to what he should be diligent in. Since it is true that 'the day is at hand,' let us put on the armour of light, and dress ourselves in garb fitting for it. Since it is true that 'the night is far spent' let us put off the works of darkness.

III. And so that brings me to the last point, and that is the combination of the Master's and the servant's thought, and the effect that it should produce upon us.

It is not enough either for our hearts or our minds that we should say 'the night cometh when no man can work.' Life is day, but it is night also. Death is night but it is dawning as well. We cannot understand either the present or the future unless we link them together. That death which is the cessation of activity in one aspect, is, for Christ's servants, as truly as for Christ, the beginning of an activity in a higher and nobler form. I do not believe in a heaven of rest, meaning by that, inaction; I still less believe in a death which puts an end to the activity of the human spirit. I believe that this world is our school, our apprenticeship, the place where we learn our trade and exercise our faculties, where we paint the picture, as it were, which we offer when we desire to be admitted to the great guild of artists, and according to the result of which, in the eye of the Judge, is our place hereafter. What the Germans call 'proof pieces'—that is the meaning of life. And though 'the night cometh when no man can work,' the day cometh when the characters we have made ourselves here, the habits we have cultivated and indulged in, the capacities we have exercised, and the set and drift of all our activity upon earth, will determine the work that we get to do there.

So then, stereoscoping these two thoughts, we get the solid image that results from them both. And it teaches us not only diligence, and thus supplies stimulus, but it determines the direction of our diligence, and thus supplies guidance. We ought to be misers of our time and opportunities. Jesus Christ said, 'I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh.' How much more ought you and I to say so? And some of us ought very specially to say it, and to feel it, because the hour when we shall have to lay down our tools is getting very near, and the shadows are lengthening. If you had been in the fields in these summer evenings during the last few days, you would have seen the haymakers at work with more and more diligence as the evening drew on darker and darker. Dear friends, some of us are at the eleventh hour. Let us fill it with diligent work. The night cometh.

But my texts not only stimulate to diligence, but they direct the diligence. If it be that there is a day beyond, and that Christ's folk are 'the children of the day,' then 'let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.' We have to cast ourselves on Him as our Saviour, to love Him as our Lord and Friend, to take Him as our Pattern and our Guide, our Help, our Light, and our Life. And then we shall neither be deceived by life's garish splendours nor oppressed by its gloom and its sorrow; we shall neither shrink from that last moment, as a night of inaction, nor be too eager to cast off the burden of our present work, but we shall cheerfully toil at what will prepare us for 'the day,' and the bell at night that rings us out of mill and factory will not be unwelcome, for it will ring us in to higher work and nobler service. The transition will be like one of those summer nights in the Arctic circle, when the sun does not dip. Through a little thin film of less light we shall pass into the perfect day, where 'the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof,' and 'there shall be no more night.'

THE SIXTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL—THE BLIND MADE TO SEE, AND THE SEEING MADE BLIND

'When Jesus had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, 7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing.'—JOHN ix. 6, 7.

The proportionate length at which this miracle and its accompanying effects are recorded, indicates very clearly the Evangelist's idea of their relative importance. Two verses are given to the story of the miracle; all the rest of the chapter to its preface and its issues. It was a great thing to heal a man that was blind from his birth, but the story of the gradual illumination of his spirit until it came to the full light of the perception of Christ as the Son of God, was far more to the Evangelist, and ought to be far more to us than giving the outward eye power to discern the outward light.

The narrative has a prologue and an epilogue, and the true point of view from which to look at it is found in the solemn words with which our Lord closes the incident. 'For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

So then the mere sign, important as it is, is the least thing that we have to look at in our contemplations now.

I. We have here our Lord unveiling His deepest motives for bestowing an unsought blessing.

It is remarkable, I think, that out of the eight miracles recorded in this Gospel, there is only one in which our Lord responds to a request to manifest His miraculous power; the others are all spontaneous.

In the other Gospels He heals sometimes because of the pleading of the sufferer; sometimes because of the request of compassionate friends or bystanders; sometimes unasked, because His own heart went out to those that were in pain and sickness. But in John's Gospel, predominantly we have the Son of God, who acts throughout as moved by His own deep heart. That view of Christ reaches its climax in His own profound words about His own laying down of His life: 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go unto the Father.' So, not so much influenced by others as deriving motive and impulse and law from Himself, He moves upon earth a fountain and not a reservoir, the Originator and the Beginner of the blessings that He bears.

And that is the point of view from which most strikingly the prologue of our narrative sets forth His action in the miracle here. 'As Jesus passed by,' says the story, 'He saw a man which was blind from his birth.' He fixes His eye upon him. No cry from the blind man's lips draws Him. He sits there unconscious of the kind eyes that were fastened upon him. The disciples stand at Christ's side, and have no share in His feelings. They ask Him to do

nothing. To them the blind man is—what? A theological problem. No trace of pity touches their hearts. They do not even seem to have reckoned upon or expected Christ's miraculous intervention. And that is a very remarkable feature in the Gospels. At all events, they evidently do not expect it here; but all that the sight of this lifelong sufferer does in them is to raise a question, 'Who did sin; he or his parents?' Perhaps they do not quite see to the bottom of the alternative that they are suggesting; and we need not trouble ourselves to ask whether there was a full-blown notion of the pre-existence of the man's soul in their minds as they ask the question. Perhaps they remembered the impotent man to whom our Lord said, 'Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee.' And they may have thought that they had His sanction to the doctrine—as old as Job's friends—that wherever there was great suffering there must first have been great sin.

That is all that the sight of sorrow does for some people. It leads to censorious judgments, or to mere idle and curious speculations. Christ lets us see what it did for Him, and what it is meant to do for us. 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but he is born blind that the works of God may be made manifest in him.' That is to say, human sorrow is to be looked at by us as an opportunity for the manifestation through us of God's mercy in relieving and stanching the wounds through which the lifeblood is ebbing away. Do not stand coldly curious or uncharitably censorious. Do not make miserable men theological problems, but see in them a call for service. See in them an opportunity for letting the light of God, so much of it as is in you, shine from you, and your hands move in works of mercy.

And then the Master goes on to state still more distinctly the law which dominated His life, and which ought to dominate ours: 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.' Then poor men's misery is an occasion for the love of God manifesting itself. Yes. But the love of God manifests itself through human media, through persons; and if we adopt the reading of these words which you will find in the Revised Version, and instead of saying '*I* must work,' read '*We* must work,' then we have Christ extending the law which ruled over His own life to all His followers, and making it supremely obligatory and binding upon each of us. He for His part, as I have said, moves through this Gospel as the Son of God, whose mercy, and all whose doings are self-originated. But the other side of that is that He moves through this Gospel in the humble attitude of filial obedience, ever recognising that the Father's will is supreme in His life; and that He is bound, with an obligation in which He rejoices, to do the will of Him that sent Him. The consciousness of a mission, the sense of filial obedience, the joyful surrender and harmonising of the will of the Son with the will of the Father; these things were the secret of the Master's life.

And coupled with them, even in Him there was the consciousness that time was short; and although beyond the Cross and the grave there stretched for Him an eternity in which He would work for the blessing of the world, yet the special work which He had to do, while wearing the veil and weakness of flesh, had but few days and hours in which it could be done. Therefore, as we ought to do, He worked under the limitations of mortality, and recognised in the brevity of life another call to eager and continuous service.

These were His motives which, in common with Him, we may share. But He adds another in which we have no share; and declares the unique consciousness which ever stirred Him

to His self-manifesting and God-manifesting acts: 'As long as I am in the world I am the Light of the world.'

Thus, moved by sorrow, recognising in man's misery the dumb cry for help, seeing in it the opportunity for the manifestation of the higher mercy of God; taking all evil to be the occasion for a brighter display of the love and the good which are divine; feeling that His one purpose upon earth was to crowd the moments with obedience to the will, and with the doing of the works of Him that sent Him; and possessing the sole and strange consciousness that from His person streams out all the light which illuminates the world—the Christ pauses before the unconscious blind man, and looking upon the poor, useless eyeballs, unaware how near light and sight stood, obeys the impulse that shapes His whole life, 'and when He had spoken *thus*,' proceeds to the strange cure.

II. So we come, in the next place, to consider Christ as veiling His power under material means.

There is only one other instance in the Gospels where a miracle is wrought in the singular fashion which is here employed, namely, the healing of the deaf-mute recorded in Mark's Gospel, where, in like manner, our Lord makes clay of the spittle, and anoints the ears of the deaf man with the clay. The variety of method in our Lord's miracles serves important purposes, as teaching us that the methods are nothing, and that He moved freely amongst them all, the real cause in every case being one and the same, the bare forth-putting of His will; and teaching us further that in each specific case there were reasons in the moral and religious condition of the persons operated upon for the adoption of the specific means employed, which we of course have no means of discovering. There is here, first then, healing by material means. The clay had no power of healing; the water of Siloam had no power of healing. The thing that healed was Christ's will, but He uses these externals to help the poor blind man to believe that he is going to be healed. He condescends to drape and veil His power in order that the dim eye, unaccustomed to the light, may look upon that shadowed representation of it when it could not gaze upon the pure brightness; as an eye may look upon a shaded lamp which could not bear its brilliance unsoftened and naked.

This healing by material means in order to accommodate Himself to the weak faith which He seeks to evoke, and to strengthen thereby, is parallel, in principle, to His own Incarnation, and to His appointment of external rites and ordinances. Baptism, the Lord's Supper, a visible Church, outward means of worship, and so on, all these come under that same category. There is no life nor power in them except His will works through them, but they are crutches and helps for a weak and sense-bound faith to climb to the apprehension of the spiritual reality. It is not the clay, it is not the water, it is not the Church, the ordinances, the outward worship, the form of prayer, the sacrament—it is none of these things that have the healing and the grace in them. They are only ladders by which we may ascend to Him. So let us neither presumptuously antedate the time when we shall be able to do without them—the Heaven in 'which there is no Temple'—nor grovellingly and superstitiously elevate them to a place of importance and of power in the Christian life which Christ never meant them to fill. He heals through material means; the true source of healing is His own loving will.

Further, He heals at a distance. We have here a parallel with the story of the nobleman's son at Capernaum, which we have already considered. There, too, we have the same phenomenon, the healing power sent forth from the Master, and operating far away from His corporeal personal presence. This was a test of faith, as the use of the clay had been a help to faith. Still He works His healing from afar, because to Him there is neither near nor far. In His divine ubiquity, that Son of Man, who in His glorified manhood is at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, is here and everywhere where there are weakness and suffering that turn to Him; ready to help, ready to bless and heal. 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'

Our Evangelist sees in the very name of that fountain in which the man washed, a symbol which is not to be passed by. 'Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam,' which, says John, 'is by interpretation, *Sent.*' We have heard already about the Pool of Siloam in this section of the Gospel. In Chapter vii. we read, 'In the last day, that great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said, "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink."' These words were probably spoken on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, on which one part of the ceremonial was the drawing, with exuberant rejoicing, of water from the Pool of Siloam, and bearing it up to the Temple. In these words Christ pointed to that fountain which rises 'fast by the oracles of God,' and wells up from beneath the hill, that on which the Temple is built, as being a symbol of Himself.

And here the Evangelist would have us suppose that, in like manner, the very name which the fountain bore (whether as being an outgush from beneath the Temple rock, or whether as being the gift of God) as applicable to Himself. The lesson to be learned is that the fountain in which we have to be cleansed 'from sin and from uncleanness,' whose waters are the lotion that will give eyesight to the blind, the true 'fountain of perpetual youth,' which men have sought for in every land, is Christ Himself. In Him we have the welling forth of the heart of God, the water of life, the water of gladness, the immortal stream of which 'whoso drinketh shall never thirst,' and which, touching the blind eyeballs, washes away obscuration and gives new power of vision.

III. Then, still further, we have here our Lord suspending healing on obedience.

'Go and wash.' As He said to the impotent man: 'Stretch forth thine hand'; as He said to the paralytic in this Gospel: 'Take up thy bed and walk'; so here He says, 'Go and wash.' And some friendly hand being stretched out to the blind man, or he himself feeling his way over the familiar path, he comes to the pool and washes, and returns seeing.

There is a double lesson there, on which I have no need to dwell. There is, first, the general truth that healing is suspended by Christ on compliance with His conditions. He does not simply say to any man, Be whole. He could and did say so sometimes in regard to bodily healing. But He cannot do so as regards the cure of our blind souls. To the sin-sick and sin-blinded man He says, 'Thou shalt be whole, if'—or 'I will make thee whole, provided that'—what?—provided that thou goest to the fountain where He has lodged the healing power. The condition on which sight comes to the blind is compliance with Christ's invitation, 'Come to Me; trust in Me; and thou shalt be whole.'

Then there is a special lesson here, and that is, Obedience brings sight. 'If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine.' Are there any of you groping in darkness, compassed

about with theological perplexities and religious doubts? Obey what you know. Do what you see clearly you ought to do. Bow your wills to the recognised truth. He who has turned all his knowledge into action will get more knowledge as soon as he needs it. 'Go and wash; and he went, and came seeing.'

IV. And now, lastly, we have here our Lord shadowing His highest work as the Healer of blind souls.

It is impossible for me to enter upon that wonderfully dramatic and instructive narrative which follows the account of the miracle, and describe the controversies between the sturdy, quick-witted, candid, blind man, and the narrow, bitter Pharisees. But just notice one or two points.

The two parties are evidently represented as types of two contrasted classes. The blind man stands for an example of honest ignorance, knowing itself ignorant, and not to be coaxed or frightened or in any way provoked to pretending to knowledge which it does not possess; firmly holding by what it does know, and because conscious of its little knowledge, therefore waiting for light and willing to be led. Hence he is at once humble and sturdy, docile and independent, ready to listen to any voice which can really teach, and formidably quick to prick with wholesome sarcasm the inflated claims of mere official pretenders. The Pharisees, on the other hand, are sure that they know everything that can be known about anything in the region of religion and morality, and in their absolute confidence of their absolute possession of the truth, in their blank unconsciousness that it was more than their official property and stock-in-trade, in their complete incapacity to discern the glory of a miracle which contravened ecclesiastical proprieties and conventionalities, in their contempt for the ignorance which they were responsible for and never thought of enlightening, in their cruel taunt directed against the man's calamity, and in their swift resort to the weapon of excommunication of one whom it was much easier to cast out than to answer, are but too plain a type of a character which is as ready to corrupt the teachers of the Church as of the synagogue.

One cannot but notice how constantly the phrase 'We know' occurs. The parents of the man use it thrice. The Pharisees have it on their lips in their first interview with him: 'We know that this man is a sinner.' He answers, declining to affirm anything about the character of the Man Jesus, because he, for his part, 'knows not,' but standing firmly by the solid reality which he 'knows,' in a very solid fashion, that his eyes have been opened. So we have the first encounter between knowledge which is ignorant, and ignorance which knows, to the manifest victory of the latter. Again, in the second round, they try to overbear the man's cool sarcasm with their vehement assertion of knowledge that God spake to Moses, but by the admission that even their knowledge did not reach to the determination of the question of the origin of Jesus' mission, lay themselves open to the sudden thrust of keen-eyed, honest humility's sharp rapier-like retort. 'Herein is a marvellous thing,' that you *Know-alls*, whose business it is to know where a professed miracle-worker comes from, 'know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes.' 'Now we know' (to use your own words) 'that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth.'

Then observe how, on both sides, a process is going on. The man is getting more and more light at each step. He begins with 'a Man which is called Jesus.' Then he gets to a 'prophet,' then he comes to 'a worshipper of God, and one that does His will.' Then he comes to, 'If this man were not of God,' in some very special sense, 'He could do nothing.' These are his own reflections, the working out of the impression made by the fact on an honest mind; and because he had so used the light which he had, therefore Jesus gives him more, and finds him with the question, 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' Then the man who had shown himself so strong in his own convictions, so independent, and hard to cajole or coerce, shows himself now all docile and submissive, and ready to accept whatever Jesus says: 'Lord, who is He, that I might believe on Him?' That was not credulity. He already knew enough of Christ to know that he ought to trust Him. And to his docility there is given the full revelation; and he hears the words which Pharisees and unrighteous men were not worthy to hear: 'Thou hast both *seen* it is He that talketh with thee.' Then intellectual conviction, moral reliance, and the utter prostration and devotion of the whole man bow him at Christ's feet. 'Lord, I believe; and He worshipped Him.'

There is the story of the progress of an honest, ignorant soul that knew itself blind, into the illumination of perfect vision.

And as he went upwards, so steadily and tragically, downwards went the others. For they had light and they would not look at it; and it blasted and blinded them. They had the manifestation of Christ, and they scoffed and jeered at it, and turned their backs upon it, and it became a curse to them; falling not like dew but like vitriol on their spirits, blistering, not refreshing.

Therefore Christ pronounces their fate, and sums up the story in the solemn two-edged sentence: 'For judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

The purpose of His coming is not to judge, but to save. But if men will not let Him save, the effect of His coming will be to harm. Therefore, His coming will separate men into two parts, as a magnet will draw all the iron filings out of a heap and leave the brass. He comes not to judge, but His coming does judge. He is set for the rise or for the fall of men, and is 'a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

Light has a twofold effect. It is torture to the diseased eye; it is gladdening to the sound one. Christ is the light, as He is also both the power of seeing and the thing seen. Therefore, it cannot but be that His shining upon men's hearts shall judge them, and shall either enlighten or darken.

We all have eyes—the organs by which we may see 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.' We have all blinded ourselves by our sin. Christ is come to show us God, to be the light by which we see God, and to strengthen and restore our faculty of seeing Him. If you welcome Him, and take Him into your hearts, He will be at once light and eyesight to you. But if you turn away from Him He will be blindness and darkness to you. He comes to pour eyesight on the blind, but He comes therefore also, most assuredly, to make still blinder those who do not know themselves to be blind, and conceit themselves to be clear-sighted. 'I thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

They who see themselves to be blind, who know themselves to be ignorant, the lowly who recognise their sinfulness and misery and helplessness, and turn in their sore need to Christ, will be led by paths of growing knowledge and blessedness to the perfect day where their strengthened vision will be able to see light in the blaze which to us now is darkness. They who say 'I see,' and know not that they are miserable and blind, nor hearken to His counsel to 'anoint their eyes with eye salve that they may see,' will have yet another film drawn over their eyes by the shining of the light which they reject, and will pass into darkness where only enough of light and of eyesight remain to make guilt. Jesus Christ is for us light and vision. Trust to Him, and your eyes will be blessed because they see God. Turn from Him and Egyptian darkness will settle on your soul. 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.'

THE GIFTS TO THE FLOCK

'... By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'—JOHN x. 9.

One does not know whether the width or the depth of this marvellous promise is the more noteworthy. Jesus Christ presents Himself before the whole race of man, and declares Himself able to deal with the needs of every individual in the tremendous whole. 'If *any man*'—no matter who, where, when.

For all noble and happy life there are at least three things needed: security, sustenance, and a field for the exercise of activity. To provide these is the end of all human society and government. Jesus Christ here says that He can give all these to every one.

The imagery of the sheep and the fold is still, of course, in His mind, and colours the form of the representation. But the substance is the declaration that, to any and every soul, no matter how ringed about with danger, no matter how hampered and hindered in work, no matter how barren of all supply earth may be, He will give these, the primal requisites of life. 'He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'

Now I only wish to deal with these three aspects of the blessedness of a true Christian life which our Lord holds forth here as accessible to us all: security, the unhindered exercise of activity, and sustenance or provision.

I. First, then, in and through Christ any man may be saved.

I take it that the word 'saved' here is rather used with reference to the imagery of the parable than in its full Christian sense of ultimate and everlasting salvation, and that its meaning in its present connection might perhaps better be set forth by the rendering 'safe' than 'saved.' At the same time, the two ideas pass into one another; and the declaration of my text is that because, step by step, conflict by conflict, in passing danger after danger, external and internal, Jesus Christ, through our union with Him, will keep us safe, at the last we shall reach eternal and everlasting salvation. 'He will save us' by the continual exercise of His protecting power, 'into His everlasting kingdom.' There is none other shelter for men's defenceless heads and naked, soft, unarmed bodies except only the shelter that is found in Him. There are creatures of low grade in the animal world which have the instinct, because their own bodies are so undefended and impotent to resist contact with sharp and penetrating substances, that they take refuge in the abandoned shells of other creatures. You and I have to betake ourselves behind the defences of that strong love and mighty Hand if ever we are to pass through life without fatal harm.

For consider that, even in regard to outward dangers, union with Jesus Christ defends and delivers us. Suppose two men, two Manchester merchants, made bankrupt by the same commercial crisis; or two shipwrecked sailors lashed upon a raft; or two men sitting side by side in a railway carriage and smashed by the same collision. One is a Christian and the other is not. The same blow is altogether different in aspect and actual effect upon the two men. They endure the same thing externally, in body or in fortune. The outward man is

similarly affected, but the man is differently affected. The one is crushed, or embittered, or driven to despair, or to drink, or to something or other to soothe the bitterness; the other bows himself with 'It is the Lord! Let Him do what seemeth Him good.'

So the two disasters are utterly different, though in form they may be the same, and he that has entered into the fold by Jesus Christ is safe, not *from* outward disaster—that would be but a poor thing—but *in* it. For to the true heart that lives in fellowship with Jesus Christ, Sorrow, though it be dark-robed, is bright-faced, soft-handed, gentle-hearted, an angel of God. 'By Me if any man enter in, he shall be safe.'

And further, in our union with Jesus Christ, by simple faith in Him and loyal submission and obedience, we do receive an impenetrable defence against the true evils, and the only things worth calling dangers. For the only real evil is the peril that we shall lose our confidence and be untrue to our best selves, and depart from the living God. Nothing is evil except that which tempts, and succeeds in tempting, us away from Him. And in regard to all such danger, to cleave to Christ, to realise His presence, to think of Him, to wear His name as an amulet on our hearts, to put the thought of Him between us and temptation as a filter through which the poisonous air shall pass, and be deprived of its virus, is the one secret of safety and victory.

Real gift of power from Jesus Christ, the influx of His strength into our weakness, of some portion of the Spirit of life that was in Him into our deadness, is promised, and the promise is abundantly fulfilled to all men who trust Him when their hour of temptation comes. As the dying martyr, when he looked up into heaven, saw Jesus Christ 'standing at the right hand of God' ready to help, and, as it were, having started from His eternal seat on the Throne in the eagerness of His desire to succour His servant, so we may all see, if we will, that dear Lord ready to succour us, and close by our sides to deliver us from the evil in the evil, its power to tempt. If we could carry that vision into our daily life, and walk in its light, when temptation rings us round, how poor all the inducements to go away from Him would look!

There is a power in the remembrance of Jesus to slay every wicked thought; and the things that tempt us most, that most directly appeal to our worst sides, to our sense, our ambition, our pride, our distrust, our self-will, all these lose their power upon us, and are discovered in their emptiness and insignificance, when once this thought flashes across the mind—Jesus Christ is my Defence, and Jesus Christ is my Pattern and my Companion.

Oh, brother! do not trust yourself out amongst the pitfalls and snares of life without Him. If you do, the real evil of all evils will seize you for its own; but keep close to that dear Lord, and then 'there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.' The hidden temptation thou wilt pass by without being harmed; the manifest temptation thou wilt trample under foot. 'Thou shalt not be afraid for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.' Hidden known temptations will be equally powerless; and in the fold into which all pass by faith in Christ thou shalt be safe. And so, kept safe from each danger and in each moment of temptation, the aggregate and sum of the several deliverances will amount to the everlasting salvation which shall be perfected in the heavens.

Only remember the condition, 'By Me if any man enter in.' That is not a thing to be done once for all, but needs perpetual repetition. When we clasp anything in our hands, however tight the initial grasp, unless there is a continual effort of renewed tightening, the muscles become lax, and we have to renew the tension, if we are to keep the grasp. So in our Christian life it is only the continual repetition of the act which our Lord here calls 'entering in by Him' that will bring to us this continual exemption from, and immunity in, the dangers that beset us.

Keep Christ between you and the storm. Keep on the lee side of the Rock of Ages. Keep behind the breakwater, for there is a wild sea running outside; and your little boat, undecked and with a feeble hand at the helm, will soon be swamped. Keep within the fold, for wolves and lions lie in every bush. Or, in plain English, live moment by moment in the realising of Christ's presence, power, and grace. So, and only so, shall you be safe.

II. Now, secondly, note, in Jesus Christ any man may find a field for the unrestricted exercise of his activity.

That metaphor of 'going in and out' is partly explained to us by the image of the flock, which passes into the fold for peaceful repose, and out again, without danger, for exercise and food; and is partly explained by the frequent use, in the Old Testament and in common conversation, of the expression 'going out and in' as the designation of the two-sided activity of human life. The one side is the contemplative life of interior union with God by faith and love; the other, the active life of practical obedience in the field of work which God provides for us. These two are both capable of being raised to their highest power, and of being discharged with the most unrestricted and joyous activity, on condition of our keeping close to Christ, and living by the faith of Him.

Note, then, 'He shall go in.' That comes first, though it interferes with the propriety of the metaphor, since the previous words already contemplate an initial 'entering in by Me, the Door.' That is to say, that, given the union with Jesus Christ by faith, there must then, as the basis of all activity, follow very frequent and deep inward acts of contemplation, of faith, and aspiration, and desire. You must go into the depths of God through Christ. You must go into the depths of your own souls through Him. You must become accustomed to withdraw yourselves from spreading yourselves out over the distractions of any external activity, howsoever imperative, charitable, or necessary, and live alone with Jesus, 'in the secret place of the Most High.' It is through Him that we have access to the mysteries and innermost shrine of the Temple. It is through Him that we draw near to the depths of Deity. It is through Him that we learn the length and breadth and height and depth of the largest and loftiest and noblest truths that concern the spirit. It is through Him that we become familiar with the inmost secrets of our own selves. And only they who habitually live this hidden and sunken life of solitary and secret communion will ever do much in the field of outward work. Christians of this generation are far too much accustomed to live only in the front rooms of the house, that look out upon the street; and they know very little—far too little for their soul's health, and far too little for the freshness of their work and its prosperity—of that inward life of silent contemplation and expectant adoration, by which all strength is fed. Do not keep all your goods in the shop windows, and have nothing on your shelves but dummies, as is the case with far too many of us to-day. Remember that the Lord said first, 'He shall go in,' and unless you do you will not be 'saved.'

But then, further, if there have been, and continue to be, this unrestricted exercise through Christ of that sweet and silent life of solitary communion with Him, then there will follow upon that an enlargement of opportunity, and power for outward service such as nothing but emancipation by faith in Him can ever bring. Howsoever, by external circumstances, you and I may be hampered and hindered, however often we may feel that if something outside of us were different, the development of our active powers would be far more satisfactory, and we could do a great deal more in Christ's cause, the true hindrance lies never without, but within; and it is only to be overcome by that plunging into the depths of fellowship with Him. And then, if we carry with us into the field of work, whether it be the commonplace, dusty, tedious, and often repulsive duties of our monotonous business; or whether it be the field of more distinctly unselfish and Christian service—if we carry with us into all places where we go to labour, the sweet thought of His presence, of His example, of His love, and of the smile that may come on His face as the reward of faithful service, then we shall find that external labour, drawing its pattern, its motive, its law, and the power for its discharge, from communion with Him, is no more task-work nor slavery; and even 'the rough places will be made smooth, and the crooked things will be made straight,' and distasteful work will be made at least tolerable, and hard burdens will be lightened, and the things that are 'seen and temporal' will shimmer into transparency, through which will shine out the things that are 'unseen and eternal.'

Some of us are constitutionally made to prefer the one of these forms of Christian activity; some of us to prefer the other. The tendencies of this generation are far too much to the latter, to the exclusion of the former. It is hard to reconcile the conflicting claims, and I know of no better way to hit the just medium than by trying to keep ourselves always in touch with Jesus Christ, and then outward labour of any sort, whether for the bread that perishes or for His kingdom and righteousness, will never become so absorbing but that in it we may have our hearts in heaven, and the silent hour of communion with Him will never be so prolonged as to neglect outward duties. There was a demoniac boy in the plain, and therefore it was impossible to build tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration. But the disciples that had not climbed the Mount were all impotent to cast out the demoniac boy. We, if we keep near to Jesus Christ, will find that through Him we can 'go in and out,' and in both be pursuing the one uniform purpose of serving and pleasing Him. So shall be fulfilled in our cases the Psalmist's prayer, that 'I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of ray life, to behold His beauty, and to inquire in His Temple.'

III. Lastly, in Jesus Christ any man may receive sustenance. 'They shall find pasture.'

The imagery of the sheep and the fold is still, of course, present to the Master's mind, and shapes the form in which this great promise is set forth.

I need only remind you, in illustration of it, of two facts, one, that in Jesus Christ Himself all the true needs of humanity are met and satisfied. He is 'the Bread of God that came down from heaven to give life to the world.' Do I want an outward object for my intellect? I have it in Him. Does my heart feel with its tendrils, which have no eyes at the ends of them, after something round which it may twine, and not fear that the prop shall ever rot or be cut down or pulled up? Jesus Christ is the home of love in which the dove may fold its wings and be at rest. Do I want (and I do if I am not a fool) an absolute and authoritative command to be laid upon my will; some one 'whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are

spells'? I find absolute authority, with no taint of tyranny, and no degradation to the subject, in that Infinite Will of His. Does my conscience need some strong detergent to be laid upon it which shall take out the stains that are most indurated, inveterate, and ingrained? I find it only in the 'blood that cleanseth from all sin.' Do my aspirations and desires seek for some solid and substantial and unquestionable and imperishable good to which, reaching out, they may be sure that they are not anchoring on cloudland? Christ is our hope. For all this complicated and craving commonwealth that I carry within my soul, there is but one satisfaction, even Jesus Christ Himself. Nothing else nourishes the whole man at once, but in Him are all the constituents that the human system requires for its nutriment and its growth in every part. So in and through Christ we find 'pasture.'

But beyond that, if we are knit to Him by simple and continual faith, love, and obedience, then what is else barrenness becomes full of nourishment, and the unsatisfying gifts of the world become rich and precious. They are nought when they are put first, they are much when they are put second.

I remember when I was in Australia seeing some wretched cattle trying to find grass on a yellow pasture where there was nothing but here and there a brown stalk that crumbled to dust in their mouths as they tried to eat it. That is the world without Jesus Christ. And I saw the same pasture six weeks after, when the rains had come, and the grass was high, rich, juicy, satisfying. That is what the world may be to you, if you will put it second, and seek first that your souls shall be fed on Jesus Christ. Then, and only then, will what is else water be turned by His touch and blessing into wine that shall fill the great jars to the brim, and be pronounced by skilled palates to be the good wine. 'I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.'

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. 15. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.'—JOHN x. 14,15.

'I am the Good Shepherd.' Perhaps even Christ never spoke more fruitful words than these. Just think how many solitary, wearied hearts they have cheered, and what a wealth of encouragement and comfort there has been in them for all generations. The little child as it lays itself down to sleep, cries—

'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night,'

and the old man lays himself down to die murmuring to himself, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' 'I am the Good Shepherd.' No preaching can do anything but weaken and dilute the force of such words, and yet, though in all their sweet, homely simplicity they appeal to every heart, there are great depths in them that are worth pondering, and profound thoughts that need some elucidation.

There are three points to be noticed—First, the general force of the metaphor, and then the two specific applications of it which our Lord Himself makes.

I. First of all, then, let me say a few words as to the general application of the metaphor. The usual notion of these words confines itself to the natural meaning, and runs out into very true, but perhaps a little sentimental, considerations, laying hold of what is so plain on the very surface that I need not spend any time in speaking about it. Christ's pattern is my law; Christ's providence is my guidance and defence—which in the present case means Christ's companionship—is my safety, my sustenance—which in the present case means that Christ Himself is the bread of my soul. The Good Shepherd exercises care, which absolves the sheep from care, and in the present case means that my only duty is meek following and quiet trust. 'I am the Good Shepherd'—here is guidance, guardianship, companionship, sustenance—all responsibility laid upon His broad shoulders, and all tenderness in His deep heart, and so for us simple obedience and quiet trust.

Another way by which we get the whole significance of this symbol is by noticing how the idea is strengthened by the word that accompanies it. Christ does not say 'I am a Shepherd,' but He says, 'I am *the good* Shepherd.' At first sight that word 'good' is interpreted, as I have said, in a kind of sentimental, poetic way, as expressing our Lord's tenderness and love and care; but I do not think that is the full meaning here. You find up and down this Gospel of St. John phrases such as, 'I am the true bread,' 'I am the true vine,' and the meaning of the word that is here translated 'good' is very nearly parallel with that idea. The true bread, the true vine, the true Shepherd—which comes to this, to use modern phraseology, that Jesus Christ, in His relation to you and me, fulfils all that in figure and shadow is represented to the meditative eye by that lower relationship between the

material shepherd and his sheep. That is the picture, this the reality. There is another point to be made clear, and that is, that whilst the word 'good' is perhaps a fair enough representation of that which is employed by our Lord, there is a special force and significance attached to the original, which is lost in our Bible. I do not know that it could have been preserved; but still it is necessary to state it. The expression here is the one that is generally rendered 'fair,' or 'lovely,' or 'beautiful,' and it belongs to the genius of that wonderful tongue in which the New Testament is written that it has a name for moral purity, considered as being lovely, the highest goodness, and the serenest beauty, which was what the old Greeks taught, howsoever little they may have practised it in their lives. And so here the thought is that *the* Shepherd stands before us, the realisation of all which that name means, set forth in such a fashion as to be infinitely lovely and perfectly fair, and to draw the admiration of any man who can appreciate that which is beautiful, and can admire that which is of good report.

There is another point still in reference to this first view of the text. Our Lord not only declares that He is the reality of which the earthly shepherd is the shadow, and that He as such is the flawless, perfect One, but that He alone is the reality. 'I am the Good Shepherd; in Me and in Me alone is that which men need.' And that leads me to another point which must just be mentioned, that we shall not reach the full meaning of these great words without taking into account the history of the metaphor in the Old Testament. Christ gives a second edition of the figure, and we are to remember all that went before. 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want'; 'Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' These are but specimens of a continuous series of utterances in the old Revelation in which Jehovah Himself is the Shepherd of mankind; and there is also another class of passages of which I will quote one or two. 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, and carry them in His arms.' 'Awake, O sword, against the Man who is my fellow; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.' There were, we should remember, two streams of representation, according to the one of which God Himself was the Shepherd of Israel, and according to the other of which the Messiah was the Shepherd; and here, as I believe, Jesus lays His hand on both the one and the other, and says: 'They are Mine, and they testify of Me.' So sweet, so gracious are the words, that we lose the sense of the grandeur of them, and need to think before we are able to understand how great and immense the claim that is made here upon our faith, and that this Man stands before us and arrogates to Himself the divine prerogative witnessed from of old by psalmist and prophet, and says that for Him were meant the prophecies of ancient times that spake of a human shepherd, and asserts that all the sustenance, care, authority, command, which the emblem suggests meet in Him in perfect measure.

II. Now let us turn to the two special points which our Lord emphasises here, as being those in which His relation as the Good Shepherd is most conspicuously given. The language of my text runs: 'I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father.' Our Western ways fail to bring out the full meaning of the emblem; but all Eastern travellers tell us what a strange bond of sympathy and loving regard, and docile recognition, springs up between the shepherd and his sheep away there in the Eastern pastures and deserts; and how he knows every one, though to a stranger's eye they are so like each other; and how even the dumb instincts and

the narrow intelligence of the silly sheep recognise the shepherd, and will not be deceived by shepherd's garments worn to deceive, and will not follow the voice of a stranger.

But we must further note that Christ lays hold of the dumb instincts of the animal, as illustrating, at the one end of the scale, the relation between Him and His followers, and lays hold of the communion between the Father and the Son at the other end of the scale, as illustrating the same thing. 'I know My sheep.' That is a knowledge like the knowledge of the shepherd, a bond of close intimacy. But He does not know them by reason of looking at them and thinking about them. It is something far more blessed than that. He knows me because He loves me; He knows me because He has sympathy with me, and I know Him, if I know Him at all, by my love, and I know Him by my sympathy, and I know Him by my communion. A loveless heart does not know the Shepherd, and unless the Shepherd's heart was all love He would not know His sheep. The Shepherd's love is an individualised love. He knows His flock as a flock because He knows the units of it, and we can rest ourselves upon the personal knowledge, which is personal love and sympathy, of Jesus Christ. 'And My sheep know Me'—not by force of intellect, not by understanding certain truths, all-important as that may be, but by having our hearts harmonised in Him, and our spirits put into sympathy and communion with Him. 'They know Me,' and rest comes with the knowledge; 'they know Me,' and in that knowing is the best answer to all doubt and fear. They are exposed to danger, but in the fold they can go quietly to rest, for they know that He is at the door watching through all dangers.

III. Turn for a moment to the last point, 'I lay down My life for the sheep.' I have said that our Western ways fail to bring out fully the element of the metaphor which refers to the kind of sympathy between the shepherd and the sheep; and our Western life also fails to bring out this other element also. Shepherds in England never have need to lay down their life for the sheep. Shepherds in Palestine often did, and sometimes do. You remember David with the lion and the bear, which is but an illustration of the reality which underlies this metaphor. So, then, in some profound way, the shepherd's death is the sheep's safety. First of all, look at that most unmistakable, emphatic—I was going to say vehement, at any rate, intense—expression of the absolute voluntariness of Christ's death, 'I lay down My life,' as a man might strip off a vesture. And this application of the metaphor is made all the stronger by the words which follow: 'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' We read, 'Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,' but here, somehow or other, the smiting of the Shepherd is not the scattering but the gathering of the flock. Here, somehow or other, the dead Shepherd has power to guard, to guide, to defend them. Here, somehow or other, the death of the Shepherd is the security of the sheep; and I say to you, the flock, that for every soul the entrance into the flock of God is through the door of the dying Christ, who laid down His life for the sheep, and makes them His sheep who trust in Him.

'OTHER SHEEP'

[Footnote: Preached before the Baptist Missionary Society.]

'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock and one Shepherd.'—JOHN x. 16 (R.V.).

There were many strange and bitter lessons in this discourse for the false shepherds, the Pharisees, to whom it was first spoken. But there was not one which would jar more upon their minds, and as they fancied, on their sacredest convictions, than this, that God's flock was wider than God's fold. Our Lord distinctly recognises Judaism with its middle wall of partition as a divine institution, and then as distinctly carries His gaze beyond it. To His hearers 'this fold,' their own national polity, held all the flock. Without were dogs, a doleful land, where 'the wild beasts of the desert met with the wild beasts of the islands.' And now this new Teacher, not content with declaring them hirelings, and Himself the only true Shepherd of Israel, breaks down the hedges and speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of men. No wonder that they said, 'He hath a devil and is mad.'

During His earthly life our Lord, as we know, confined His own personal ministry for the most part to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Not exclusively so, for He made at least one journey into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, teaching and healing; a Syro-Phcenician woman held His feet, and received her request; and one of His miracles, of feeding the multitude, was wrought for hungry Gentiles. But while His work was in Israel, it was for mankind; and while 'this fold,' generally speaking, circumscribed His toils, it did not confine His love nor His thoughts. More than once world-wide declarations and promises broke from His lips, even before the final universal commission, 'Preach the Gospel to every creature.' 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' 'I am the Light of the world.' These and other similar sayings give us His lofty consciousness that He has received 'the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.' Parallel with them in substance are the words before us, which, for our present purpose, we may regard as containing lessons from our Lord Himself of how He looked and would have us look on the heathen world, on His work and ours, and on the certain issues of both.

I. We have here Christ teaching us how to think of the heathen world.

Observe that His words are not a declaration that all mankind are His sheep. The previous verses have distinctly defined a class of men as possessing the name, and the succeeding ones reiterate the definition, and with equal distinctness exclude another class. 'Ye believe not, because ye are not My sheep as I said unto you.' His sheep are they who know Him and are known of Him. Between Him and them there is a communion of love, a union of life, and a consequent reciprocal knowledge, which transcends the closest intimacies of earthly life, and finds its only analogue in that deep and mysterious oneness which subsists between the Father, who alone knoweth the Son, and the only begotten Son, who being ever in the bosom of the Father, alone knoweth Him and revealeth Him to us. 'I know My sheep and am known of Mine; as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father.

They hear My voice and follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life.' Such are the characteristics of that relation between Christ and men by which they become His sheep. It is such souls as these whom our Lord beholds in the wasteful wilderness. He is speaking not of a relation which all men bear to Him by virtue of their creation, but of one which *they* bear to Him who believe in His name.

Now this interpretation of the words does by no means contradict, but rather presupposes and rests upon the truth that all mankind come within the love of the divine heart, that He died for all, that all may be the subjects of His mediatorial kingdom, recipients of the offered mercy of God in Christ, and committed to the stewardship of the missionary Church. Resting upon these truths, the words of our text advance a step further and contemplate those who 'shall hereafter believe on Me.' Whether they be few or many is not the matter in hand. Whether at any future time they shall include all the dwellers upon earth is not the matter in hand. That every soul of man is included in the adaptation and intention and offer of the Gospel is not the matter in hand. But this is the matter in hand, that Jesus Christ in that moment of lofty elevation when He looked onwards to giving His life for the sheep, looked outwards also, far afield, and saw in every nation and people souls that He knew were His, and would one day know Him, and be led by Him 'in green pastures and beside still waters.'

But where or what were they when He spoke? He does not mean that already they had heard His voice and were following His steps, and knew His love, and had received eternal life at His hand. This He cannot mean, for the plain reason that He goes on to speak of His 'bringing' them and of their 'hearing,' a work yet to be done. It can only be, then, that He speaks of them thus in the fullness of that divine knowledge which 'calls things that are not as though they were.' It is then a prophetic word which He speaks here.

We have only to think of the condition of the civilised heathendom of Christ's own day in order to feel the force of our text in its primary application. While the work of salvation was being prepared for the world in the life and death of our Lord, the world was being prepared for the tidings of salvation. Everywhere men were losing their faith in their idols, and longing for some deliverer. Some had become weary of the hollowness of philosophical speculation, and, like Pilate, were asking 'What is truth?' whilst, unlike Him, they waited for an answer, and will believe it when it comes from the lips of the Incarnate wisdom. Such were the Magi who were led by their starry science to His cradle, and went back to the depths of the Eastern lands with a better light than had guided them thither. Such were not a few of the early Christian converts, who had long been seeking hopelessly for goodly pearls, and had so been learning to know the worth of the One when it was offered to them. There were men who had been long sickening with despair amidst the rottenness of decaying mythologies and corrupting morals, and longing for some breath from heaven to blow health to themselves and to the world, and had so been learning to welcome 'the rushing mighty wind' when it came in power. There were simple souls, without as well as within the chosen people, waiting for the Consolation, though they knew not whence it was to come. There were many who had already learned to believe that 'salvation is of the Jews,' though they had still to learn that salvation is in Jesus. Such were that Aethiopian statesman who was poring over Isaiah when Philip joined him, the Roman centurion at Caesarea whose prayers and alms came up with acceptance before God, these Greeks of the

West who came to His cross as the Eastern sages to His cradle, and were in Christ's eyes the advance guard and first scattered harbingers of the flocks who should come flying for refuge to Him lifted on the Cross, 'like doves to their windows.' The whole world showed that the fullness of time had come; and the history of the early years of the Church reveals in how many souls the process of preparation had been silently going on. It was like the flush of early spring, when all the buds that had been maturing and swelling in the cold, burst, and the tender flowers that had been reaching upwards to the surface in all the hard winter laugh out in beauty, and a green veil covers all the hedges at the first flash of the April sun.

Not only these were in our Lord's thoughts when He saw His sheep in heathen lands. There were many who had no such previous preparation, but were plunged in all the darkness, nor knew that it was dark. Not only those wearied of idolatry, and dissatisfied with creeds outworn, but the barbarous people of Illyricum, the profligates of Corinth, hard rude men like the jailer at Philippi, and many more were before His penetrating eye. He who sees beneath the surface, and beyond the present, beholds His sheep where men can only see wolves. He sees an Apostle in the blaspheming Saul, a teacher for all generations in the African Augustine while yet a sensualist and a Manichee, a reformer in the eager monk Luther, a poet-evangelist in the tinker Bunyan. He sees the future saint in the present sinner, the angel's wings budding on many a shoulder where the world's burdens lie heavy, and the new name written on many a forehead that as yet bears but the mark of the beast, and the number of His name.

And the sheep whom He sees while He speaks are not only the men of that generation. These mighty words are world-wide and world-lasting. The whole of the ages are in His mind. All nations are gathered before His prophetic vision, even as they shall one day be gathered before His judgment throne, and in all the countless mass His hand touches and His love clasps those who to the very end of time shall come to His call with loving faith, shall follow His steps with glad obedience.

Thus does Christ look out upon the world that lay beyond the fold. I cannot stay to do more than refer in passing to the spirit which the words of our text breathe. There is the lofty consciousness that He is the Leader and Guide, the Friend and Helper of all, that He stands solitary in His power to bless. There is the full confidence that the earth is His to its uttermost border. There is the clear vision of the sorrowful condition of these heathen people, without a shepherd and without a fold, wandering on every high mountain and dying in every thirsty land where there is no water. There are the tenderest pity and yearning love for them in their extremity. There is the clear assurance that they will come and be blessed in Him. I pass by all the other thoughts, which naturally found themselves on these words, in order to urge the one which is most appropriate to our present engagement. Let us, dear brethren, take Christ as our pattern in our contemplations of the heathen world.

He has set us the example of an outgoing look directed far beyond the limits of the existing churches, far beyond the point of present achievement. We are but too apt to circumscribe our operative thoughts and our warm sympathies within the circle of our sight, or of our own personal associations. Our selfishness and our indolence affect the objects of our contemplations quite as much as they do the character of our work. They

vitiate both, by making ourselves the great object of both, and by weakening the force of both in a ratio that increases rapidly with the increasing distance from that favourite centre. It is but a subtle form of the same disease which keeps our thoughts penned within the bounds of any fold, or limited by the progress already achieved. For us the whole world is the possession of our Lord, who has died to redeem us. By us the whole ought to be contemplated with that same spirit of prophetic confidence which filled Him when He said, 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold.' To press onwards, 'forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before,' is the only fitting attitude for Christian men, either in regard to the gradual purifying of their own characters, or in regard to the gradual winning of the world for Christ. We ought to make all past successes stepping-stones to nobler things. The true use of the present is to reach up from it to a loftier future. The distance beckons; well for us if it do not beckon us in vain. We have yet to learn the first lesson of our Master's spirit, as expressed in these words, if we have not become familiar with the pitying contemplation of the wastes beyond the fold, nor fixed deep in our minds the faith that the amplitude of its walls will have to be widened with growing years till it fills the world. The cry echoes to us from of old, 'Lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left.' We take the first step to respond to the summons when we make the 'regions beyond' one of the standing subjects of our devout thoughts, and take heed of supposing that the Church as we know it, has the same measurement which the man with the golden rod has measured for the eternal courts of Jerusalem, that shall be the joy of the whole earth. The very genius of the Gospel is aspiring. It is content with nothing short of universality for the sweep, and eternity for the duration, and absolute completeness for the measure, of its bestowments on man. We should be like men on a voyage of discovery, whose task is felt to be incomplete until headland after headland that fades in the dim distance has been rounded and surveyed, and the flag of our country planted upon it. After each has been passed another arises from the water, onwards we must go. There is no pause for our thoughts, none for our sympathy, none for our work, till our keels have visited, and the 'shout of a King' has been heard on every shore that fills 'the breadth of Thy land, O Emmanuel!' The limits of the visible community of Christ's Church to-day are far within the borders to which it must one day stretch. It is for us, taught by His words, to understand that we are yet as it were but encamped by Jericho, and at the beginning of the campaign. Ai and Bethhoron, and many a fight more are before us yet. The camp of the invaders, when they lay around the city of palm-trees, with the mountains in front and the Jordan behind, was not more unlike the settled order of the nation when it filled the land, than the ranks of Christ's army to-day are to the mighty multitudes that shall one day name His name, and follow His banner. Let us live in the future, and lay strongly hold on the distant; for both are our Lord's, and by so doing we shall the better do our Master's work in the present, and at hand.

He has set us the example of a *penetrating* gaze into heathenism, which reveals beneath its monotonous miseries, the souls that are His. We ought to look on every field of Christian effort with the assurance that in it there are some who will hear His voice. As it was when He came, so it is ever and everywhere. The world is being prepared for the Gospel. In some broad regions, faith in idolatry is dying out, and the moral condition of the people is

undergoing a slow elevation. Individuals are being weaned from their gods, they know not how, and they will not know why till they hear of Christ. He sees in every land where the Gospel is being taken 'a people prepared for the Lord.' He sees the gold gleaming in the crevices of the caves, the gems, rough and unpolished, lying in the matrix. He looks not merely on the great mass of idolaters, but He sees the single souls who shall hear. It is for us to look on the same mass with confidence caught from His. Neither apathetic indifference nor faint-hearted doubt should be permitted to weaken our hands. The prospect may seem very dark, the power of the enemy very great, our resources very inadequate; but let us look with Christ's eye, we shall know that everywhere we may hope to find a response to our message. Who they may be, we know not. How many they may be, we know not. How they may be guided by Him, they know not. But He knows all. We may know that they are there. And as we cannot tell who they are but only that they are, we are bound to cherish hopes for all—the most degraded and outcast of our race. We have no right to give up any field or any man as hopeless. Christ's sheep will be found coming out of the midst of wolves and goats. Darkness may cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but if we look upon it as Christ did, and as He would have us to look, we shall see lights flickering here and there in the obscurity, which shall burst out into a blaze. The prophetic eye, the boundlessly hopeful heart, the strong confidence that in every land where He is preached there will be those who shall hear—these are what He gives us when He says, 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'

There is one other thought connected with these words which may be briefly referred to. It is that even now, in all lands where the Gospel has been preached, there are those whom Christ has received, although they have no connection with His visible Church.

There are many goats within the fold. There are many sheep without it. Even in lands where the Gospel has long been preached, we do not venture to identify profession by Church fellowship with living union with Christ. Much more is this true of our missionary efforts, and the apparent converts whom they make. The results that appear are no measure of the results that have actually been accomplished. We often hear of men who had caught up some stray word in a Bengali market-place, or received a tract by the roadside from some passing missionary, and who, having carried away the seed in their hearts, had long been living as Christians remote from all churches and unknown by any. We can easily conceive that timidity in some cases, and distance in others, swell the ranks of these secret disciples. Though they follow not the footsteps of the flock, the Shepherd will lead them in their solitude. There will be many more names in the Lamb's book of life, depend upon it, than ever are written on the roll-calls of our churches, or in missionary statistics. The shooting-stars that yearly fill our sky are visible to us for a moment, when their orbit passes into the lighted heavens, and then they disappear in the shadow of the earth. But astronomers tell us that they are always there though to us they seem to blaze but for a moment. We cannot see them, but they move on their darkling path and have a sun round which they circle. So be sure that in many heathen lands there are believing souls, seen by us but for an instant and then lost, who yet fill their unseen place, and move obedient round the Sun of Righteousness. Their names on earth are dark, but when the manifestation of the sons of God shall come, they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever. Our work has results beyond our knowledge

now. When the Church, the Lamb's wife, shall lift up her eyes at the end of the days, prophecy tells us that she shall wonder to see her thronging children, whom she had never known till then, and will say, 'Who hath begotten me these? Behold I was left alone. These, where had they been?' These were God's hidden ones, nourished and brought up beyond the pale of the outward Church, but brought at last to share her triumph, and to abide at her side. 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'

What confidence then, what tender pity, what hope should fill our minds when we look on the heathen world! We must never be contented with present achievements. We are committed to a task which cannot end till all the world hears the joyful sound and is blessed by walking in the light of His countenance. When the great Roman Catholic missionary, the Apostle of the East, was lying on his dying bed among the barbarous people whom he loved, his passing spirit was busy about his work, and, even in the article of death, while the glazing eye saw no more clearly and the ashen lips had begun to stiffen into eternal silence, visions of further conquests flashed before him, and his last word was 'Amplius'—*Onward*! It ought to be the motto of the missionary work of us, who boast a purer faith, to carry to the heathen and to fire our own souls. If ever we are tempted to repose, to despondency, to rest and be thankful when we number up our work and our converts, let us listen to His voice as it speaks in that supreme hour when He beheld the vision of the Cross, and beyond it that of a gathered world: 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.'

We have here—

II. Christ teaching us how to think of His work and ours.

'Them also I must bring.' A necessity is laid upon Him, which springs at once from that divine work which is the law of His life, and from His own love and pity. The means for accomplishing this necessary work are implied in the context, as in other parallel Scriptural sayings, to be His propitiatory death. The instrumentality employed is not only His own personal agency on earth, nor only His throned rule on the right hand of God with power over the Spirit of holiness, but also the work of His Church, and His work through them. Of that He is mainly speaking when He says, 'Them also I must bring.' Here, then, are some truths which ought to underlie and shape as well as animate our efforts for heathenism.

And first, remember that the same sovereign necessity which was laid on Him presses on us.

The 'Spirit of life' which was in Christ had its 'law,' which was the will of God. That shaped all His being, and He set us the example of perfectly clear recognition of, and perfect obedience to it, from the first moment when He said, 'I must be about My Father's business,' to the last, when He sighed forth, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.' Hence the frequent sayings setting forth His work as determined by an imperative 'must,' which, whether it be alleged in reference to some apparently small or to some manifestly great thing in His life, is always equally imperative, and whether it seem to be based on the need for the fulfilment of some prophetic word, or on the proprieties and congruities of sonship, reposes at last on the will of God. His final words on the Passover night, before he went out to Gethsemane in the moonlight, contain the influence which moulded His whole earthly life, 'As the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.'

And this divine will constitutes for Him the deepest ground of the necessity in the case before us. The eternal counsels of God had willed that 'all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of the Lord'; therefore, whatever the toils and the pains, the loss and the death, He, whose meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him, must give Himself to the task, nor rest till, one by one, the weary wanderers are brought back on His shoulders and folded in His love.

In all which, let us remember, Jesus Christ is our pattern, not in His work for the salvation of men, but in the spirit in which He did His work. The solemn law of duty before which He bowed His head is a law for us also. The authoritative imperative which He obeyed has power over us. If we would have our lives holy and strong, wise and good, we must have 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, making us free from the law of sin and death,' for the obedience to the higher law enfranchises from slavery to the lower, and all other authority ceases over us when we are Christ's men. We are bound to service directed to the same end as His—even the salvation of the world. The same voice which says to Him, 'I will give Thee for a light to the Gentiles,' says to us, 'Ye are My witnesses, and My servant whom I have chosen.' The same Will which hath constituted Him the anointed Prophet, says of us, 'Touch not Mine anointed and do My prophets no harm.' We are redeemed that we may show forth God's praises. Not for ourselves alone, nor for purposes terminating in our own personal acceptance with God, or the perfecting of our own characters, priceless as these are, but for ends which affect the world has God had mercy on us. We are bought with a price that we may be the servants of God. We have received that we may give forth,

'God doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves.'

'Arise, shine, for thy light is come.'

This missionary work of ours, then, is not one that can be taken up and laid down at our own pleasure. It is no excrescence, or accidental outgrowth of the Church's life. We are all too apt to think of it as an extra, a kind of work of supererogation, which those may engage in who have a liking that way, and which those who do not care about it may leave alone, and no harm done. When shall we come to feel deeply, constantly, practically, that it must be done, and that we are sinning when we neglect it? Dear brethren, have we laid on our hearts and consciences the solemn weight of that necessity which moulded His life? Have we felt the awful power of God's plainly spoken will, driving us to this task? Do we know anything of that spirit which hears ever-pealing in our ears that awful commandment, 'Go, go to all the world, preach, preach the Gospel to every creature?' God commands us to take the trumpet, and if we would not soil our souls with gross and palpable sin, we must set it to our lips and sound an alarm, that by His grace shall wake the sleepers, and make the hoary walls of the robber-city that has afflicted the earth for so many weary millenniums, rock to their fall, that the redeemed of the Lord may pass over and set the captives free.

If we felt this as we ought, surely our consecration would be more complete, and our service more worthy. A clear conviction of God's will pointing the path for us, is, in all things, a wondrous help to vigorous action, to calmness of heart, and thus to success. In this mighty work, it would brace us for larger efforts, and fit us for larger results. It would simplify and deepen our motives, and thus evolve from them nobler deeds and purer

sacrifices. To all objections from so-called prudence, to all calculations from sparse results, to all cavils of onlookers who may carp and seek to hinder, we should have one all-sufficient answer. It is not for us to bandy arguments on such points as these. We care nothing for difficulties, for discouragements, for cost. We may think about these till we lose all the manly chivalry of Christian character, like the Apostle who gazed on the white crests of the angry breakers flashing in the pale moonlight, till he forgot who stood on the storm, and began to sink in his great fear. A nobler spirit ought to be ours. The toil is sore, the sacrifices many, and the yield seems small. Be it so! To all such thoughts we have one answer—Oh! that we felt more its solemn power!—such is the will of God. We are doing as we are bid, and we mean to go on. 'Them also must I bring,' says the Master. 'Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel,' echoes the Apostle. Let us, in the consecration of resolved hearts, and in trembling obedience to the divine will, add our choral Amen, and in the face of all the paralysing suggestions of our own selfishness, and all the tempting voices of worldly wisdom and unbelieving scornfulness that would stay our enterprise, let us fling back the grand old answer, 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.'

We must not forget, however, that it was no abhorrent toil to which Christ reluctantly consented. But in this case, as always with Him, the words of prophecy were true, 'I delight to do Thy will.' The schism between law and choice had no existence for Him; and when He says that He must bring the wandering sheep into the fold, He means not more because of God's will than because of His own yearning desire to pour out the treasures of His mercy.

So it ought to be with us. Our missionary work should not be degraded beneath the level of duty indeed, but neither should it be left on that level. We ought not only to be led to it by a power without, but impelled by an energy within. If we would be like our Master, we must know the necessity arising from our own heart's promptings, which leads us to work for Him. He has very imperfectly caught the spirit of the Gospel who has never felt the word as a fire in his bones, making him weary of forbearing. If we only take to this work because we are bid, and without sympathy for men, and longing desire to bring them all to Him who has blessed us, we may almost as well leave it alone. We shall do very little good to anybody, to ourselves little, to the world less. That our own hearts may teach us this necessity, we must live near our Master, and know His grace for ourselves. In proportion as we do, we shall be eager to proclaim it, and not stand idling in a corner of the market-place, till some unmistakable order sends us into the vineyard, but go for the relief of our own feelings. 'This is a day of good tidings, and we cannot hold our peace,' said the poor lepers in the camp to one another. The same feeling that we must tell the good news just because we know it, and it will make our brethren glad, is part of the Christian character. A blessed necessity, then, is laid upon us. A blessed work is given us, which brings with it at once the joy of obedience to our Father's will, and the joy of gratifying a deep instinct of our nature. 'Them also must I bring,' said the Saviour, because He loved men. 'To me who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches,' echoes the Apostle. Let us live in the light of our Lord's eye, and drink deep of His spirit, till the talk becomes a grace and privilege, not a burden, and till silence

and idleness in His cause shall be felt to be impossible, because it would be violence to our own feelings, and the loss of a great joy as well as sin against our Father's will.

Consider again, by what means the sheep are to be brought to Christ? The context distinctly answers the question. There His propitiatory death is emphatically set forth as the power by which it is to be accomplished. The verse before our text says, 'I lay down My life for the sheep'; that after our text says, 'Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life.' It is the same connection of means and end as appears in the wonderful words with which He received the Greeks who came up to the feast, and heard the great truth, for want of which their philosophy and art came to nothing. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone'—'I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me.'

Yes, brethren! the Cross of Christ, and it alone, gathers men into a unity; for it alone draws men to Christ. His death, as our propitiation, effects such a change in the aspects of the divine government, and in the incidence of the divine justice, that 'we who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.' His death, as the constraining motive of life in the hearts which receive it, draws them away from their own ways by the cords of love, and binds them to Him. His death is His purchase of the gifts of that divine Spirit for the rebellious, who now convinces the world and endows the Church, 'till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' The First Begotten from the dead is therefore the prince of all the kings of the earth, and He so rides among the nations as to bring the world to Himself. The philosophy of history lies in the words, 'Other sheep I have, them also I must bring.'

Christian missions abundantly prove that the Cross and the proclamation of the Cross have this power, and that nothing else has. It is not the ethics of Christianity, nor the abstract truths which may be deduced from its story, but it is the story of the suffering Redeemer that gives it its power over human hearts, in all conditions, and climates, and stages of culture. The magnetism of the Cross alone is mighty enough to overcome the gravitation of the soul to sin and the world. We hear much nowadays about a new reformation which is to be effected on Christianity, by purifying it of its historical facts and of its repulsive sacrificial aspect. When this is done, and the pure spiritual ideas are disengaged from their fleshly garb, then, we are told, will be the apotheosis and glorification of Christ. This will be the real lifting up from the earth; this will draw all men. Aye, and when this is done what will be left? Christianity will be purified back again into a vague Deism, which one would have thought had proved itself toothless and impotent, centuries ago. Spiritualising will turn out to be very like evaporating, the residuum will be a miserably unsatisfactory something, near akin to nothing, and certainly incapable either of firing its disciples with a desire to spread their faith, if we may call it so by courtesy, or of drawing men to itself. A Christianity without a Sacrifice on the altar will be a Christianity without worshippers in the Temple. The King of Kings who rides forth conquering is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood. The Christian Emperor saw in the heavens the Cross, with the legend: 'In this sign thou shalt conquer!' It is an emblem true for all time. The Cross is the power unto salvation. The races scattered on the earth have often sought to make for themselves a rallying-point, and their attempts at union have become Babels, centres of repulsion and confusion. God has given us the Centre, the Tree of life in the

midst. The crucified Saviour is the Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign for the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and resting beneath the shadow of the Cross be at peace. 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'

Once more our Lord teaches us here to identify the work of the Church with His own. What His servants do for Him He does, for from Him they derive the power to do it, and from Him comes the blessing which makes it effectual. He works in us, He works with us, He works for us. He works in us. We have the grace of His Spirit to touch our hearts and sanctify us for service. He puts it into the wills and desires of His Church to consecrate themselves to the task. He teaches them sympathy and self-devotion. He breathes world-wide aspirations into them. He raises up men to go forth. He works *with* us, helping our weakness, enlightening our ignorance, directing our steps, giving power to the student at his dry task of grammar and dictionary, being mouth and wisdom to them that speak in His name, touching the hearts of them that hear. In our basket He puts the seed-corn; the furrows of the field He makes soft with showers, and when it is sown He blesses the springing thereof. He works for us, opening doors among the nations, ordering the courses of providence, and holding His hand around His servants, so that they are immortal till their work is done; and can ever lift up thankful voices to Him who leads them joyful captives at His own triumphal car, as it rolls on its stately march, scattering the sweet odours of His name wherever the long procession sweeps through the world. We neither go a warfare at our own charges, nor in our own might. He will fight with us, and He will pay us liberally at the last. When we count up our own resources, do not we often leave Christ out of the reckoning? Do we not measure our strength against the enemies', and forget that one weak man, plus Christ, is always in the majority? 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of My Father which speaketh in you.' 'I laboured, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' So helped, so inspired, we are wrong to despond; we are wrong not to expect great things and attempt great things; we are wrong not to dare, we are wrong to do the work of the Lord negligently. Let us feel that Christ's work is ours, and we shall be bowed beneath the solemnity of the thought, shall accept joyfully the necessity. Let us feel that our work is Christ's, and we shall rejoice in infirmity that His power may rest upon us, shall bid adieu to faint-hearted fears, and be sure that then it must prosper. 'Arise, O Lord! plead Thine own cause.' Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but to Thy name give glory.

'The Lord ascended into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God, and they went everywhere preaching the word.' It seems a strange contrast between the rest of the Lord, sitting in sublime expectancy of conscious power til His enemies become His footstool, and the toils of His scattered disciples. It is like that moment which the genius of the great painter has caught in an immortal work, when Jesus in rapt communion with the mighty dead, and crowned with the accepting word from Heaven, floated transfigured above the Holy Mount, while below His disciples wrestled impotently with the demon that would not be cast out. But it is not really contrast. He has not so parted the toils as that His are over ere ours begin. He has not left His Church militant to bear the brunt of the battle while the Captain of the Lord's host only watches the current of the heady fight—like Moses from the safe mountain. The Evangelist goes on to tell us that the Lord also was working with them and sharing their toils, lightening their burdens, preparing for them successes on earth, and a rest like His when He shall gird Himself and serve them. Thus, the first time that the

heavens opened again to mortal eyes after they closed on His ascending form, was to show Him to the martyr in the council chamber, not sitting careless or restful, but *standing* at the right hand of God, to intercede for, to strengthen, to receive and glorify His dying servant. He goes with us where we go, and through our works and gifts and prayers, through our proclamation of the Cross, He worketh His will, and shall finally accomplish that great necessity laid upon Him by the Father's counsels, and upon us by His commandment, and to be effected by His death, that He should die, not for that nation only, but also that He should gather together in one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

We have here—

III. Our Lord teaching us how to think of the certain issues of His work and ours.

'They shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.' We may regard these words as embracing two things; a nearer issue, namely, the response that will always attend His call; and a more remote, namely, the completion of His work. There is, of course, a very blessed sense in which the latter words are true now, and have been ever since Paul could say to those who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, 'He hath made both one. Now, therefore, ye are no more foreigners but fellow-citizens with the saints.' But the fold which now exists, limited in numbers, with its members but partially conscious of their unity, and surrounded by those who follow hireling shepherds, does not exhaust these great words. They shall not be accomplished till that far-off future have come.

But for the present we have the predictions of the former clause, 'They shall hear My voice.' What manner of expectations does it teach us to cherish? It seems to speak not of universal reception of Christ's message, but of some as hearing and some as forbearing. It teaches us to look for divers results attending our missionary work. There will always be a Dionysius the Areopagite, the woman Lydia, the kindly barbarians, the conscience-stricken jailer. There will always be the scoffers, who mock when they hear of 'Jesus and the resurrection'; the hesitating who compound with conscience by promising to hear again of this matter, the fierce opponents who invoke constituted authorities or mob violence to crush the message.

Again, the words seem to contemplate a long task. There is nothing about the rate at which His Kingdom shall spread, not a syllable to answer inquiries as to when the end shall come. The whole tone of the language suggests the idea that bringing back the sheep is to take a long time, and to cost many a tedious journey into the wilderness. Not a sudden outburst, but a slow kindling of the flame, is what our Lord teaches us here to expect.

But while thus calm in tone and moderate in expectation, the words breathe a hope as confident as it is calm, as clear as it is moderate. There will always be a response. His voice shall never be lifted up in the snow-storm or lonely hillsides only to be blown back into His own ears, unheard and unheeded. Be they few or many, they shall hear. Be the toil longer or shorter, more or less severe, it shall not be in vain.

And to these expectations we shall do wisely if we attune ours. Omit from your hopes what your Lord has omitted from His promises; do not ask what He has not told. Do not wonder if you encounter what He met, for the disciple is not greater than his Master, and only if they have kept My saying will they keep yours also. But, on the other hand, expect as much as He has prophesied; accept it when it comes as the fruit of His work, not of yours,

and build a firm faith that your labour shall not be in vain on these calm and prescient words.

So much for the course of the kingdom. And what of the end? One by one the sheep have been brought, at last they are all gathered in, not a hoof left behind. The stars steal singly into their places in the heavens as the darkness deepens, and He 'bringeth them forth by number,' until at the noon of night the sky is crowded with their lights, and 'for that He is great in power, not one faileth.' What expectations are we here taught to cherish then of the final issue?

Mark, to begin with, that there is implied the ultimate universality of His dominion and sole supremacy of His throne. There is to be but one Shepherd, and over all the earth a great unity of obedience to Him. Here is the knell of all authority that does not own Him, and the subordination of all that does. The hirelings, the blind guides, that have misled and afflicted humanity for so many weary ages, shall be all sunk in oblivion. The false gods shall be discrowned, and lie shattered on their temple-sill, and there shall be no worshippers to care for or to try to repair their discomfiture. Bow your heads before Him, thinkers who have led men on devious paths and spoken but a partial truth and a wisdom all confused with foolishness! Lower your swords before Him, warriors who have builded your cities on blood and led men like sheep to the slaughter! He is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. Cast your crowns before Him, princes and all judges of the earth, for He is King by right of the crown of thorns! This is the Lord of all—Teacher, Leader, Ruler of all men. All other names shall be forgotten but His shall abide. If they have been shepherds who would not come in by the door, a ransomed world shall rejoice over their fall with the ancient hymn, 'Other gods beside Thee have had dominion over us; they are dead, they shall not live, Thou hast destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.' If they have been subject to the chief Shepherd and ensamples to the flock, they will rejoice to decrease before His increase, and having helped to bring the Bride to the Bridegroom, will gladly stand aside and be forgotten in the perfect love that enters into full fruition at the last. Then when none contest nor intercept the reverential obedience that the whole world brings to Him, shall be fulfilled the firm promise which declared long ago: 'I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He will feed them and be their Shepherd.'

Mark again the blessed nature of the relation between Christ and all men which is here foretold. From of old, the shepherd has been in all nations the emblem of kingly power, of leadership of every sort. How often the fact has contradicted the symbol let history tell. But with Jesus the reality does not only contradict, but even transcends, the tender old comparison. He rules with a gentle sway. His sceptre is no rod of iron, but the shepherd's crook, and the inmost meaning of its use is that it may 'comfort' us, as David learned to feel. There gather round the metaphor all thoughts of merciful guidance, of tender care, of a helping arm when we are weak, of a loving bosom where we are carried when we are weary. It speaks of a seeking love that roams over every high hill till it finds, and of a strong shoulder that bears us back when He has found. It tells of sweet hours of rest in the hot noontide by still waters, of ample provision for all the soul's longings in green pastures. It speaks of footsteps that go before, in which men may follow and find them ways of pleasantness. It speaks of gentle callings by name which draw the heart. It speaks of defence when lion and bear come ravening down, and of safe couching by night when the

silent stars behold the sleeping sheep and the wakeful shepherd. He Himself gives its highest significance to the emblem, in the words of this great discourse, when He fixes on His knowledge, His calling of His sheep, His going before them, His giving His life for them. Such are the gracious blessings which here He teaches us to think of as possessed in the happy days that shall be, by all the world.

And, on the other hand, the symbol speaks of confiding love in the hearts of men, of a great peacefulness of meek obedience stilling and gladdening their wills, of the consciousness of His perfect love, and the knowledge of all His gracious character, of sweet answering communion with Him, of safety from all enemies, of freedom, of familiar passage in and out to God. Thus knit together shall be the one fold and the one Shepherd. 'They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them, for He that hath mercy on them shall feed them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.'

Mark again what a vision is here given of the relations of men with one another.

They are to be all gathered into a peaceful unity. They are to be one because they all hearken to one voice. It is to be observed that our Lord does not say, as our English Bible makes Him say, that there is to be one fold. He drops that word of set purpose in the latter clause of our text, and substitutes for it another, which may perhaps be best rendered flock. Why this change in the expression? Because, as it would seem, he would have us learn that the unity of that blessed future time is not to be like the unity of the Jewish Church, a formal and external one. That ancient polity was a fold. It held its members together by outward bonds of uniformity. But the universal Church of the future is to be a flock. It is to be really and visibly one. But it is to be so, not because it is hemmed in by one enclosure, but because it is to be gathered round one Shepherd. The more closely they are drawn to Him, the more near will they be to each other. The centre in which all the radii meet keeps them all in their places. 'We being many are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread.' In the ritual of the Old Covenant, the great golden candlestick with its seven branches stood in the court of the Temple, emblem of the formal oneness of the people, which was meant to be the light of the Lord to a dark world. In the vision of the New Covenant, the seer in Patmos beheld not the one lamp with its branches, but the seven golden candlesticks, which were made into a holier and a freer unity because the Son of Man walked in their midst—emblem of the oneness in diversity of the peoples, who were sometimes darkness, but shall one day be light in the Lord. There may continue to be national distinctions. There may or there may not be any external unity. But at all events our Lord turns away our thoughts from the outward to the inward, and bids us be sure that though the folds be many the flock shall be one, because they shall all hear and follow Him.

The words, however, suggest for us the blessed thought of the peaceful relations that shall then subsist among men. The tribes of the earth shall couch beside each other like the quiet sheep in the fold, and having learned of His great meekness, they shall no more bite nor devour one another. Alas! alas! the words seem too good to be true. They seem long, long of coming to pass. Ever since they were spoken the old bloody work has been going on, and the old lusts of the human heart have been busy sowing the dragon's teeth that shall spring up in wars and fightings. In savage lands warfare rages on, ceaseless, ignoble, unrecorded, and seemingly purposeless as that of animalcules in a drop of water. On

civilised soil, men, who love the same Christ and worship Him in the same tongue, are fronting each other at this hour. The war of actual swords, and the war of conflicting creeds, and the jostling of human selfishness in the rough road of life, are all around us, and their seeds are within ourselves. The race of men do not live like folded sheep, rather like a flock of wolves, who first run over and then devour their weaker fellows.

But here is a fairer hope, and it will be fulfilled when all evil thoughts, and all selfish desires, and all jealous grudgings shall vanish from men's hearts, as unclean spirits at cockcrow, and shall leave them, self-forgetful, yielding of their own prerogatives, desirous of no other man's, abhorrent of inflicting, and patient of receiving wrong. There will be no fuel then to blow into sulphurous flame, though all the blasts from hell were to fan the embers. But peace and concord shall be in all men, for Christ shall be in all. National distinctions may abide, but national enmities—the oldest and deepest, shall disappear. There shall still be Assyria, and Egypt, and Israel, but their former relation will be replaced by a bond of amity in their common possession of Him who is our peace. 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.' God be thanked! that though we see, and our fathers have seen, so much that seems to contradict our hopes of a peaceful world, and though to-day the hell-hounds of war are baying over the earth, and though nowhere can we see signs even of the approach of the halcyon time, yet we can wait for the vision, knowing that it will come at the appointed time, when

'No war or battle's sound
Is heard the world around,
The idle spear and shield are high uphung;
The trumpet speaks not to the armed throng,
And Kings sit still, with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by.'

Such are the thoughts which our Lord would teach us as to the present and as to the future of our missionary work. For the one, moderate expectations of success, not unchequered by disappointment, and a brave patience in long toil. For the other, hopes which cannot be too glowing, and a faith which cannot be too obstinate. The one is being fulfilled in our own and our brethren's experience even now; we may be therefore all the more sure that the other will be so in due time. If we look with Christ's eyes, we shall not be depressed by the apparent unbroken surface of heathenism but see, as He did, everywhere souls that belong to Him, who may and must be won; we shall joyfully embrace the work which He has given us to do; we shall arm ourselves against the discouragements of the present, by living much in the past at the foot of the Cross, till we catch the true image of the Saviour's love, and much in the future in the midst of the ransomed flock, till we too behold the roses blossoming in the wilderness, the bright waters covering all the dry places in the desert, and the families of men sitting, clothed and in their right mind, at the feet of Jesus.

Our missionary work is the pure and inevitable result of a belief in these words of my text. Can a man believe that Christ has other sheep for whom He died because He must bring them in, whom He will bring in because He died, and *not* work according to his power

in the line of the divine purposes? The missionary spirit is but the Christian spirit working in one particular direction. Missionary societies are but one of the authentic outcomes of Christian principles, as natural as holiness of life, or the act of prayer.

To secure, then, a more vigorous energy in such work, we need chiefly what we need for all Christian growth—namely, more and deeper communion with Christ, a more vivid realisation of His grace and love for ourselves. And then we need that, under the double stimulus of His love and of His commandment—which at bottom are one—our minds should be more frequently occupied with this subject of Christian missions. Most of us know too little about the matter to feel very much. And then we need that we should more seriously reflect upon the facts in relation to our own personal responsibility and duty. You complain of the triteness of such appeals as this sermon. Brethren, have you ever tried that recipe for freshening up well-worn truths, namely, thinking about them in connection with the simplest, most important of all questions—what, then, ought I to do in view of these truths? Am I exaggerating when I say, that not one-half of the professing Christians of our day give an hour in the year to pondering that question, with reference to missionary work? Oh! dear friends, see to it that you live in Christ for yourselves, and then see to it that you think His thoughts about the heathen world, till your pity is stirred and your mind braced to the firm resolve that you too will work the works of Christ and bring in the wanderers.

We have had as large results as Christ has led us to expect, and far larger than we deserved. Christian missions are yet in their infancy—alas! that it should be so. But in these seventy years since they may be said to have begun, what wonderful successes have been achieved. We are often told that we have done nothing. Is it so? The plant has been got together, methods of working have been systematised, mistakes in some measure corrected. We have spent much of our time in learning how to work, and that process is by no means over yet. But with all these deductions, which ought fairly to be made, how much has been accomplished? The Bible has been put into the languages of seven hundred millions of men. The beginnings of a Christian literature have been supplied for five-sixths of the world. Half a million of professed converts have been gathered in, or as many as there were at the end of the first century, after about the same number of years of labour, and with apostles for missionaries and miracles for proof. And if these still bear on their ankles the marks of the fetters, and limp as they walk, or cannot see very clearly at first, it is no more than might be expected from their long darkness in the prison-house, and it is no more than Paul had to contend with at Ephesus and Corinth.

Every church that has engaged in the toil has shared in the blessing, and has its own instances of special prosperity. We have had Jamaica; the London Missionary Society, Madagascar, and the South Seas; the Wesleyans, Fiji; the Episcopal Societies, Tinnevelly; the American brethren, Burmah, and the Karens. Some of the ruder mythologies have been so utterly extirpated that the children of idolaters have seen the gods whom their fathers worshipped for the first time in the British Museum. While over those more compact and scientific systems which lie like an incubus on mighty peoples, there has crept a sickening consciousness of a coming doom, and they already half own their conqueror in the Stronger One than they.

'They feel from Judah's land
The dreaded Infant's hand.'

'Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, the idols are upon the beasts.' Surely God has granted us success enough for our thankful confidence, more than enough for our deserts. I repeat it, it is as much as He promised, as much as we had any right to expect, and it is a vast deal more than any other system of belief or of no belief, any of your spiritualised Christianities, or still more intangible creeds has ever managed, or ever thought of trying. To those who taunt us with no success, and who perhaps would not dislike Christian missions so much if they disliked Christian truth a little less, we may very fairly and calmly answer—This rod has budded at all events; do you the same with your enchantments.

But the past is no measure of the future. From the very nature of the undertaking the ratio of progress increases at a rapid rate. The first ten years of labour in India showed twenty-seven converts, the seventh ten showed more than twenty-seven thousand. The preparation may be as slow as the solemn gathering of the thunder-clouds, as they noiselessly steal into their places, and slowly upheave their grey billowing crests; the final success may be as swift as the lightning which flashes in an instant from one side of the heavens to the other. It takes long years to hew the tunnel, to 'make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain,' and then smooth and fleet the great power rushes along the rails. To us the cry comes, 'Prepare ye in the desert an highway for our God.' The toil is sore and long, but 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.' The Alpine summits lie white and ghastly in the spring sunshine, and it seems to pour ineffectual beams on their piled cold; but by slow degrees it is silently loosening the bands of the snow, and after a while a goat's step, as it passes along a rocky ledge, or a breath of wind will move a tiny particle, and in an instant its motion spreads over a mile of mountain side, and the avalanche is rushing swifter and mightier at every foot down to the valley below, where it will all turn into sweet water, and ripple glancing in the sunshine. Such is our work. It may seem very hopeless, and be mostly unobservable in surface results, but it is very real for all that. The conquering impulse, for which our task may have been to prepare the way, will be given, and then we shall wonder to see how surely the kingdom was coming, even when we observed it not.

Ye have need of patience, and to feed your patience, ye have need of fellowship with Christ, of faith in His promises, of sympathy with His mind. God has given us, dear brethren, special reason for renewed consecration to this service in the blessings which have during the year terminated our anxieties and crowned our work for our own Society. But let us not dwell upon what has been done. These successes are brooks by the way at which we may drink—nothing more. We ought to be like shepherds in the lonely mountain glens, who see in the fast-falling snow and the bitter blast a summons to the hillside, and there all the night long wherever the drift lies deepest and the wind bites the most sharply, search the most eagerly for the poor half-dead creatures, and as they find each, bear it back to the safe shelter, nor stay behind to count the rescued, nor to rest their weariness, for all the bright light in the cottage and the blackness without, but forth again on the same quest, till all the Master's sheep have been rescued from the white death that lay treacherous around, and are sleeping at peace in His folds. A mighty Voice ought ever to be sounding in our ears, 'Other sheep I have,' and the answer of our hearts and of our lives should be, 'Them also, O

Lord! will I try to bring.' Not till the far-off issue is accomplished shall we have a right to rest, and then we, with all those He has helped us to gather to His side, shall be among that flock, whom He who is at once Lamb and Shepherd, our Brother and our Lord, our Sacrifice and King, 'shall feed and lead by living fountains of waters,' in the sweet pastures of the upper world, where there are no ravening wolves, nor false guides to terrify and bewilder His flock any more at all for ever.

THE DELAYS OF LOVE

'Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was.'—JOHN xi. 5, 6.

We learn from a later verse of this chapter that Lazarus had been dead four days when Christ reached Bethany. The distance from that village to the probable place of Christ's abode, when He received the message, was about a day's journey. If, therefore, to the two days on which He abode still after the receipt of the news, we add the day which the messengers took to reach Him and the day which He occupied in travelling, we get the four days since which Lazarus had been laid in his grave. Consequently the probability is that, when our Lord had the message, the man was dead. Christ did not remain still, therefore, in order to work a greater miracle by raising Lazarus from the dead than He would have done by healing, but He stayed—strange as it would appear—for reasons closely connected with the highest well-being of all the beloved three, and *because* He loved them.

John is always very particular in his use of that word 'therefore,' and he points out many a subtle and beautiful connection of cause and effect by his employment of it. I do not know that any of them are more significant and more full of illumination with regard to the ways of divine providence than the instance before us. How these two sisters must have looked down the rocky road that led up from Jericho during those four weary days, to see if there were any signs of His coming. How strange it must have appeared to the disciples themselves that He made no sign of movement, notwithstanding the message. Perhaps John's scrupulous carefulness in pointing out that His love was Christ's reason for His quiescence may reflect a remembrance of the doubts that had crept over the minds of himself and his brethren during these two days of strange inaction. The Evangelist will have us learn a lesson, which reaches far beyond the instance in hand, and casts light on many dark places.

I. Christ's delays are the delays of love.

We have all of us, I suppose, had experience of desires for the removal of bitterness or sorrows, or for the fulfilment of expectations and wishes, which we believed, on the best evidence that we could find, to be in accordance with His will, and which we have been able to make prayers out of, in true faith and submission, which prayers have had to be offered over and over and over again, and no answer has come, It is part of the method of Providence that the lifting away of the burden and the coming of the desires should be a hope deferred. And instead of stumbling at the mystery, or feeling as if it made a great demand upon our faith, would it not be wiser for us to lay hold of that little word of the Apostle's here, and to see in it a small window that opens out on to a boundless prospect, and a glimpse into the very heart of the divine motives in His dealings with us?

If we could once get that conviction into our hearts, how quietly we should go about our work! What a beautiful and brave patience there would be in us, if we habitually felt that the only reason which actuates God's providence in its choice of times of fulfilling our

desires and lifting away our bitterness is our own good! Nothing but the purest and simplest love, transparent and without a fold in it, sways Him in all that He does. Why should it be so difficult for us to believe this? If we were more in the way of looking at life, with all its often unwelcome duty, and its arrows of pain and sorrow, and all the disappointments and other ills that it is heir to, as a discipline, and were to think less about the unpleasantness, and more about the purpose, of what befalls us, we should find far less difficulty in understanding that His delay is born of love, and is a token of His tender care.

Sorrow is prolonged for the same reason as it was sent. It is of little use to send it for a little while. In the majority of cases, time is an element in its working its right effect upon us. If the weight is lifted, the elastic substance beneath springs up again. As soon as the wind passes over the cornfield, the bowing ears raise themselves. You have to steep foul things in water for a good while before the pure liquid washes out the stains. And so time is an element in all the good that we get out of the discipline of life. Therefore, the same love which sends must necessarily protract, beyond our desires, the discipline under which we are put. If we thought of it, as I have said, more frequently as discipline and schooling, and less frequently as pain and a burden, we should understand the meaning of things a great deal better than we do, and should be able to face them with braver hearts, and with a patient, almost joyous, endurance.

If we think of some of the purposes of our sorrows and burdens, we shall discern still more clearly that time is needed for accomplishing them, and that, therefore, love must delay its coming to take them away. For example, the object of them all, and the highest blessing that any of us can obtain, is that our wills should be bent until they coincide with God's, and that takes time. The shipwright, when he gets a bit of timber that he wants to make a 'knee' out of, knows that to mould it into the right form is not the work of a day. A will may be *broken* at a blow, but it will take a while to *bend* it. And just because swiftly passing disasters have little permanent effect in moulding our wills, it is a blessing, and not an evil, to have some standing fact in our lives, which will make a continual demand upon us for continually repeated acts of bowing ourselves beneath His sweet, though it may seem severe, will. God's love in Jesus Christ can give us nothing better than the opportunity of bowing our wills to His, and saying, 'Not mine, but Thine be done.' If that is why He stops on the other side of Jordan, and does not come even to the loving messages of beloved hearts, then He shows His love in the sweetest and the loftiest form. So, dear friends, if you carry a lifelong sorrow, do not think that it is a mystery why it should lie upon your shoulders when there are omnipotence and an infinite heart in the heavens. If it has the effect of bending you to His purpose, it is the truest token of His loving care that He can send. In like manner, is it not worth carrying a weight of unfulfilled wishes, and a weariness of unalleviated sorrows, if these do teach us three things, which are one thing—faith, endurance, prayerfulness, and so knit us by a threefold cord that cannot be broken, to the very heart of God Himself?

II. This delayed help always comes at the right time.

Do not let us forget that Heaven's clock is different from ours. In our day there are twelve hours, and in God's a thousand years. What seems long to us is to Him 'a little while.' Let us not imitate the shortsighted impatience of His disciples, who said, 'What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith.' The time of separation looked so long in

anticipation to them, and to Him it had dwindled to a moment. For two days, eight-and-forty hours, He delayed His answer to Mary and Martha, and they thought it an eternity, while the heavy hours crept by, and they only said, 'It's very weary, He cometh not, they said.' How long did it look to them when they had got Lazarus back?

The longest protraction of the fulfilment of the most yearning expectation and fulfilled desire will seem but as the winking of an eyelid when we get to estimate duration by the same scale by which He estimates it, the scale of Eternity. The ephemeral insect, born in the morning and dead when the day fades, has a still minuter scale than ours, but we should not think of regulating our estimate of long and short by it. Do not let us commit the equal absurdity of regulating the march of His providence by the swift beating of our timepieces. God works leisurely because God has eternity to work in.

The answer always comes at the right time, and is punctual though delayed. For instance, Peter is in prison. The Church keeps praying for him; prays on, day after day. No answer. The week of the feast comes. Prayer is made intensely and fervently and continuously. No answer. The slow hours pass away. The last day of his life, as it would appear, comes and goes. No answer. The night gathers; prayer rises to heaven. The last hour of the last watch of the last night that he had to live has come, and as the veil of darkness is thinning, and the day is beginning to break, 'the angel of the Lord shone round about him.' But there is no haste in his deliverance. All is done leisurely, as in the confidence of ample time to spare, and perfect security. He is bidden to arise quickly, but there is no hurry in the stages of his liberation. 'Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals.' He is to take time to lace them. There is no fear of the quaternion of soldiers waking, or of there not being time to do all. We can fancy the half-sleeping and wholly-bewildered Apostle fumbling at the sandal-strings, in dread of some movement rousing his guards, and the calm angel face looking on. The sandals fastened, he is bidden to put on his garments and follow. With equal leisure and orderliness he is conducted through the first and the second guard of sleeping soldiers, and then through the prison gate. He might have been lifted at once clean out of his dungeon, and set down in the house many were gathered praying for him. But more signal was the demonstration of power which a deliverance so gradual gave, when it led him slowly past all obstacles and paralysed their power. God is never in haste. He never comes too soon nor too late. 'The Lord shall help them, and that right early.' Sennacherib's army is round the city, famine is within the walls. To-morrow will be too late. But to-night the angel strikes, and the enemies are all dead men. So God's delay makes the deliverance the more signal and joyous when it is granted. And though hope deferred may sometimes make the heart sick, the desire, when it comes, is a tree of life.

III. The best help is not delayed.

The principle which we have been illustrating applies only to one half—and that the less important half—of our prayers and of Christ's answers. For in regard to spiritual blessings, and our petitions for fuller, purer, and diviner life, there is no delay. In that region the law is not 'He abode still two days in the same place,' but 'Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.' If you have been praying for deeper knowledge of God, for lives liker His, for hearts more filled with the Spirit, and have not had the answer, do not fall back upon the misapplication of such a principle as this of my text, which has nothing to do with that region; but remember that the only reason why good people do not

immediately get the blessings of the Christian life for which they ask lies in themselves, and not at all in God. 'Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and have not, because'—not because He delays, but because—'ye ask amiss,' or because, having asked, you get up from your knees and go away, not looking to see whether the blessing is coming down or not.

Ah! there is a sad amount of lying and hypocrisy in prayers for spiritual blessings. Many petitioners do not want to have them. They would not know what to do with them if they got them. They make the requests because their fathers did so before them, and because these are the right kind of things to say in a prayer. Such prayers get no answers. If a man prays for some spiritual enlargement, and then goes out into the world and lives clean contrary to his prayers, what right has he to say that God delays His answers? No, He does not delay His answers, but we push back His answers, and the gift that *is* given we will not take. Let us remember that the two halves of the divine dealings are not regulated by the same principle, though they be regulated by the same motive; and that the love which often delays for our good, in regard to the desires that have reference to outward things, is swift as the lightning to answer every petition which moves within the circle of our spiritual life.

'Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye stand praying, believe that' then and there 'ye receive them'; and the undelaying God will take care that 'you shall have them.'

CHRIST'S QUESTION TO EACH

For the Young

'... Believest then this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord.'—JOHN xi. 26, 27.

As each of these annual sermons which I have preached for so long comes round, I feel more solemnly the growing probability that it may be the last. Like a man nearing the end of his day's work, I want to make the most of the remaining moments. Whether this is the last sermon of the sort that I shall preach or not, it is certainly the last of the kind that some of you will hear from me, or possibly from any one.

So, dear friends, I have felt that neither you nor I can afford to waste this hour in considering subjects of secondary interest, appropriate as some of them might be. I wish to come to the main point at once, and to press upon you all, and especially on the younger portion of this audience, the question of your own personal religion.

The words of my text, as you will probably remember, were addressed by our Lord to Martha, as she was writhing in agony over her dead brother. Christ proclaims, with singular calmness and majesty, His character and work as the Resurrection and the Life, and then seeks to draw her from her absorbing sorrow to an effort of faith which shall grasp the truths He proclaims. He flashes out this sudden question, like the swift thrust of a gleaming dagger. It is a demand for credence to His assertion—on His bare word—tremendous as that assertion is. And nobly was the demand met by the as swift, unfaltering answer, 'Yea, Lord,' I believe in Thee, and so I believe in Thy word.

Now, friends, Jesus Christ is putting the same question to each of us. And I pray that our answers may be Martha's.

I. Note, first, the significance of the question.

'This.' What is *this*? The answer will tell us what are the central essential facts, faith in which makes a Christian. Of course the form in which our Lord's previous utterance was cast was coloured by the circumstances under which He spoke, and was so shaped as to meet the momentary exigency. But whilst thus the form is determined by the fact that He was speaking to a heart wrung by separation, and as a preliminary to a mighty act of resurrection, the essential truths which are so expressed are those which, as I believe, constitute the fundamental truths of Christianity—the very core and heart of the Gospel.

Turn, then, but for a moment, to what immediately precedes my text. Our Lord says three things. First, He asserts His supernatural character and divine relation to life: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' Next, He declares that it is possible for Him to communicate to dying and to dead men a life which triumphs over death, and laughs at change, and persists through the superficial experience which we christen by the name of Death, unaffected, undiminished, as some sweet spring might gush up in the heart of a salt, solitary sea. And then He declares that the condition on which He, the Life-giver, gives of His immortal life to dying men, is their trust in Him. These three—His character and work, the gifts of which

His hands are full, and the way by which the gifts may be appropriated by us men—these three are, as I take it, the central facts of Christianity. 'Believest thou this?'

The question comes to us all; and in these days of unsettlement it is well to have some clear understanding of what is the 'irreducible minimum' of Christian teaching. I take it that it lies here. There are two opposite errors which, like all opposite errors, are bolted together, and revolve round a common centre. The one of them is the extreme conservative tendency which regards every pin and bolt of the tabernacle as if it were equally sacred with the altar and the ark. And the other is the tendency which christens itself 'liberal and progressive,' and which is always ready to exchange old lamps, though they have burnt brightly in the past, for new ones that are as yet only glittering metal and untried. In these days, when it is a presumption against any opinion, that our fathers believed it (an error into which young people are most prone to fall), and when, by the energy of contradiction, that error has evoked, and is evoking, the opposite exaggeration that adheres to all that is traditional, to all that has been regarded as belonging to the essentials of the Christian faith, and so is fearful, trembling for the Ark of God when there is no need, let us fall back upon these great words of the Master, and see that the things which constitute the living heart of His message and gift to the world are neither more nor less than these three: the supernatural Christ, the life which He imparts, and the condition on which He bestows it. 'Believest thou this?' If you do, you need take very little heed of the fluctuations of contemporary opinion as to other matters, valuable and important as these may be in their place; and may let men say what they will about disputed questions—about the method by which the vehicle of revelation has been created and preserved, about the regulation of the external forms of the Church, about a hundred other things that men often lose their tempers and spoil their Christianity by fighting for, and fall back upon the great central verity, a Christ from above, the Giver of Life to all that put their trust in Him.

Let me expand this question for you. 'We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'—'believest thou this?' 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ'—'believest thou this?' 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish'—'believest thou this?' 'The Son of Man came… to give His life a ransom for many'—'believest thou this?' 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'—'believest thou this?' 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept'—'believest thou this?' 'I go to prepare a place for you'—'believest thou this?' 'Where I am there shall also My servant be'—'believest thou this?' 'So shall we ever be with the Lord'—'believest thou this?' That is Christianity; and not theories about inspiration, and priesthood, and sacramental efficacy, or any of the other thorny questions which have, in the course of ages, started up. Here is the living centre; hold fast, I beseech you, by it.

Then, again, the significance of this question is in the direction of making clear for us the way by which men lay hold of these great truths. The truths are of such a sort as that merely to say, 'Oh yes, I believe it; it is quite true!' is by no means sufficient. If a man tells me that two parallel lines produced ever so far will never meet, I say, 'Yes, I believe it'; and there is nothing more to be done or said. If a man says to me, 'Two and two make four,' I say, 'Yes'; and there my assent ends. If a man says, 'It is right to do right,' it is quite clear that the attitude of intellectual assent, which was quite enough for the other order of

statements, is not enough for this one; and to merely say, 'Oh yes, it is right to do right,' is by no means the only attitude which we ought to take in regard to such a truth. And if God comes to me and says, 'Thou art a sinful man, and Jesus Christ has died for thee; and if thou takest Him for thy Saviour thou shalt be saved in this life, and saved for ever,' it is just as clear that no mere acceptance of the saying as a verity exhausts my proper attitude in reference to it. Or to come to plainer words, no man will really, and out and out, and adequately, believe this gospel unless he does a great deal more than assent to it or refrain from contradicting it.

So I desire to urge this form of the question on you now. Dear brethren, do you *trust* in 'this,' which you say you believe? There is no greater enemy of the Christian faith than the ordinary lazy—what the philosophers call *otiose*, which is only a grand word for lazy—assent of the understanding, because men will not take the trouble to contradict it or think about it.

That is the sort of Christianity which is the Christianity of a good many church and chapel-goers. They do not care enough about the subject to contradict the ordinary run of belief. Of all impotent things there is nothing more impotent than a creed which lies idly in a man's head, and never has touched his heart or his will. Why, I should get on a great deal better if I were talking to people that had never heard anything about the gospel than I have any chance of getting on with you, who have been drenched with it all your days, till it goes over you and runs off like water off a duck's back. The shells that were hurled against the earthworks of Sebastopol broke away the front surface of the mounds, and then the rubbish protected the fortifications; and that is what happens with many of my hearers. You have heard the gospel so often that the *debris* of your old hearings is raised between you and me, and my words cannot get at you. 'Believest thou this?'—not in the fashion in which people stand up in church or chapel and look about them and rattle off the Creed every Sunday of their lives, and attach not the ghost of an idea to a single clause of it; but in the sense that the conviction of these truths is so deep in your hearts that it moves your whole nature to cast yourselves on Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your all. That is the belief to which alone the life that is promised here will come. Oh! brethren, I have no business to ask you the question, and you have no need to answer it to me! Sometimes good, well-meaning people do a mint of harm by pushing such questions into the faces of people unprepared. But take the question into your own hearts, and remember what belief is, and what it is that you have to believe, and answer according to its true significance, and in the light of conscience, the solemn question that I press upon you.

II. Now, secondly, let me ask you to think of what depends upon the answer.

In the case before us—if I may look back to it for an instant—there is a very illuminative instance of what did depend upon it. Martha had to believe that Christ was the Resurrection and the Life as a condition precedent to her seeing that He was so. For, as He said Himself before He spoke the mighty word which raised Lazarus, 'Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' and so her faith was the condition of her being able to verify the facts which her faith grasped. Well, let me put that into plainer words. It is just this—a man gets from Christ what he trusts Christ to give him, and there is no other way of proving the truth of His promises than by accepting His promises, and then they fulfil themselves. You cannot know that a medicine will cure you

till you swallow it. You must first 'taste' before you 'see that God is good.' Faith verifies itself by the experience it brings.

And what does it bring? I said, all for which a man trusts Christ. All is summed up in that one favourite word of our Lord as revealed in this fourth Gospel, which includes in itself everything of blessedness and of righteousness—life, life eternal. Dear brethren, you and I, apart from Jesus Christ, are dead in trespasses and sins. The life that we live in the flesh is an apparent life, which covers over the true death of separation from God. And you young people, fix this in your minds at the beginning, it will save you many a heartache, and many an error—there is nothing worth calling life, except that which comes to a quiet heart submissive and enfranchised through faith in Jesus Christ. And if you will trust yourselves to Him, and answer this question with your ringing 'Yea, Lord!' then you will get a life which will quicken you out of your deadness; a life which will mould you day by day into more entire beauty of character and conformity with Himself; a life which will shed sweetness and charm over dusty commonplaces, and make sudden verdure spring in dreary, herbless deserts; a life which will bring a solemn joy into sorrow, a strength for every duty; which will bring manna in the wilderness, honey from the rock, light in darkness, and a present God for your sufficient portion; a life which will run on into the dim glories of eternity, and know no change but advancement, through the millenniums of ages.

But, dear brethren, whilst thus, on condition of their faith, the door into all divine and endless blessedness and progress is flung wide open for men, do not forget the other side of the issues which depend on this question. For if it is true that Jesus Christ is Life, and the Source of it, and that faith in Him is the way by which you and I get it, then there is no escape from the solemn conclusion that to be out of Christ, and not to be exercising faith in Him, is to be infected with death, and to be shut up in a charnel-house. I dare not suppress the plain teaching of Jesus Christ Himself: 'He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life.' The issues that depend upon the answer to this question of my text may be summed up, if I may venture to say so, by taking the words of our Lord Himself and converting them into their opposite. He said, 'He that believeth … though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.' That implies, He that believeth *not* in Christ, though he were living, yet shall he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth *not* shall never live. *These* are the issues—the alternative issues—that depend on your answer to this question.

III. And now, lastly, let me ask you to think of the direct personal appeal to every soul that lies in this question.

I have dwelt upon two out of the three words of which the question is composed—'*believest* thou *this*?' Let me dwell for a moment on the third of them—'believest *thou*?'

Now that suggests the thought on which I do not need to dwell, but which I seek briefly to lay upon your hearts and consciences—viz., the intensely personal act of your own faith, by which alone Jesus Christ can be of any use to you. Do not be led away by any vague notions which people have about the benefits of a Church or its ordinances. Do not suppose that any sacraments or any priest can do for you what you have to do in the awful solitude of your own determining will—put out your hand and grasp Jesus Christ. Can any person or thing be the condition or channel of spiritual blessing to you, except in so far as your own

individual act of trust comes into play? You must take the bread with your own hands, you must masticate it with your own teeth, you must digest it with your own organs, before it can minister nourishment to your blood and force to your life. And there is only one way by which any man can come into any vital and life-giving connection with Jesus Christ, and that is, by the exercise of his own personal faith.

And remember, too, that as the exercise of uniting trust in Jesus Christ is exclusively your own affair, so exclusively your own affair is the responsibility of answering this question. To you alone is it addressed. You, and only you, have to answer it.

There was once a poor woman who went after Jesus Christ, and put out a pale, wasted, tremulous finger to touch the hem of His garment. His fine sensitiveness detected the light pressure of that petitioning finger, and allowed virtue to go out, though the crowd surged about Him and thronged Him. No crowds come between you and Jesus Christ. You and He, the two of you, have, so to speak, the world to yourselves, and straight to *you* comes this question, 'Believest *thou*?'

Ah! brethren, that habit of skulking into the middle of the multitude, and letting the most earnest appeal from the pulpit go diffused over the audience is the reason why you sit there quiet, complacent, perhaps wholly unaffected by what I am trying to make a pointed, individual address. Suppose all the other people in this place of worship were away but you and I, would not the word that I am trying to speak come with more force to your hearts than it does now? Well, think away the world and all its millions, and realise the fact that you stand in Christ's presence, with all His regard concentrated upon you, and that to thee individually this question comes from a gracious, loving heart, which longs that you answer, 'Yea, Lord, I believe!'

Why should you not? Suppose you said to Him, 'No, Lord, I do not'; and suppose He said, 'Why do you not?' what do you think you would say then? You will have to answer it one day, in very solemn circumstances, when all the crowds will fall away, as they do from a soldier called out of the ranks to go up and answer for mutiny to his commanding officer. 'Every one of us shall give an account of himself,' and the lips that said so lovingly at the grave of Lazarus, 'Believest thou this?' and are saying it again, dear friend, to you, even through my poor words, will ask it once more. For this is the question the answer to which settles whether we shall stand at His right hand or at His left. Say now, with humble faith, 'Yea, Lord!' and you will have the blessing of them who have not seen, and yet have believed.

THE OPEN GRAVE AT BETHANY

'Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said. Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died! Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I know that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.'—JOHN xi. 30-45.

Why did Jesus stay outside Bethany and summon Martha and Mary to come to Him? Apparently that He might keep Himself apart from the noisy crowd of conventional mourners whose presence affronted the majesty and sanctity of sorrow, and that He might speak to the hearts of the two real mourners. A divine decorum forbade Him to go to the house. The Life-bringer keeps apart. His comforts are spoken in solitude. He reverenced grief. How beautifully His sympathetic delicacy contrasts with the heartless rush of those who 'were comforting' Mary when they thought that she was driven to go suddenly to the grave by a fresh burst of sorrow! If they had had any real sympathy or perception, they would have stayed where they were, and let the poor burdened heart find ease in lonely weeping. But, like all vulgar souls, they had one idea—never to leave mourners alone or let them weep.

Three stages seem discernible in the self-revelation of Jesus in this crowning miracle: His agitation and tears, His majestic confidence in His life-giving power now to be manifested, and His actual exercise of that power.

I. The repetition by Mary of Martha's words, as her first salutation, tells a pathetic story of the one thought that had filled both sisters' hearts in these four dreary days. Why had He not come? How easily He could have come! How surely He could have prevented all this misery! Confidence in His power blends strangely with doubt as to His care. A hint of

reproach is in the words, but more than a hint of faith in His might. He does not rebuke the rash judgment implied, for He knew the true love underlying it; but He does not directly answer Mary, as He had done Martha, for the two sisters needed different treatment.

We note that Mary has no such hope as Martha had expressed. Her more passive, meditative disposition had bowed itself, and let the grief overwhelm her. So in her we see a specimen of the excess of sorrow which indulges in the monotonous repetition of what would have happened if something else that did not happen had happened, and which is too deeply dark to let a gleam of hope shine in. Words will do little to comfort such grief. Silent sharing of its weeping and helpful deeds will do most.

So a great wave of emotion swept across the usually calm soul of Jesus, which John bids us trace to its cause by 'therefore' (ver. 33). The sight of Mary's real, and the mourners' half-real, tears, and the sound of their loud 'keening,' shook His spirit, and He yielded to, and even encouraged, the rush of feeling ('troubled Himself'). But not only sympathy and sorrow ruffled the clear mirror of His spirit; another disturbing element was present. He 'was moved with indignation' (Rev. Ver. marg.). Anger at Providence often mingles with our grief, but that was not Christ's indignation. The only worthy explanation of that strange ingredient in Christ's agitation is that it was directed against the source of death,—namely, sin. He saw the cause manifested in the effects. He wept for the one, He was wroth at the other. The tears witnessed to the perfect love of the man, and of the God revealed in the man; the indignation witnessed to the recoil and aversion from sin of the perfectly righteous Man, and of the holy God manifested in Him. We get one glimpse into His heart, as on to some ocean heaving and mist-covered. The momentary sight proclaims the union in Him, as the Incarnate Word, of pity for our woes and of aversion from our sins.

His question as to the place of the tomb is not what we should have expected; but its very abruptness indicates effort to suppress emotion, and resolve to lose no time in redressing the grief. Most sweetly human are the tears that start afresh after the moment's repression, as the little company begin to move towards the grave. And most sadly human are the unsympathetic criticisms of His sacred sorrow. Even the best affected of the bystanders are cool enough to note them as tokens of His love, at which perhaps there is a trace of wonder; while others snarl out a sarcasm which is double-barrelled, as casting doubt on the reality either of the love or of the power. 'It is easy to weep, but if He had cared for him, and could work miracles, He might surely have kept him alive.' How blind men are! 'Jesus wept,' and all that the lookers-on felt was astonishment that He should have cared so much for a dead man of no importance, or carping doubt as to the genuineness of His grief and the reality of His power. He shows us His pity and sorrow still—to no more effect with many.

II. The passage to the tomb was marked by his continued agitation. But his arrival there brought calm and majesty. Now the time has come which He had in view when He left his refuge beyond Jordan; and, as is often the case with ourselves, suddenly tremor and tumult leave the spirit when face to face with a moment of crisis. There is nothing more remarkable in this narrative than the contrast between Jesus weeping and indignant, and Jesus serene and authoritative as He stands fronting the cave-sepulchre. The sudden transformation must have awed the gazers.

He points to the stone, which, probably like that of many a grave discovered in Palestine, rolled in a groove cut in the rocky floor in front of the tomb. The command accords with His continual habit of confining the miraculous within the narrowest limits. He will do nothing by miracle which can be done without it. Lazarus could have heard and emerged, though the stone had remained. If the story had been a myth, he very likely would have done so. Like 'loose him, and let him go,' this is a little touch that cannot have been invented, and helps to confirm the simple, historical character of the account.

Not less natural, though certainly as unlikely to have been told unless it had happened, is Martha's interruption. She must have heard what was going on, and, with her usual activity, have joined the procession, though we left her in the house. She thinks that Jesus is going into the grave; and a certain reverence for the poor remains, as well as for Him, makes her shrink from the thought of even His loving eyes seeing them now. Clearly she has forgotten the dim hopes which had begun in her when she talked with Jesus. Therefore He gently reminds her of these; for His words (ver. 40) can scarcely refer to anything but that interview, though the precise form of expression now used is not found in the report of it (vers. 25-27).

We mark Christ's calm confidence in His own power. His identification of its effect with the outflashing of the glory of God, and His encouragement to her to exercise faith by suspending her sight of that glory upon her faith. Does that mean that He would not raise her brother unless she believed? No; for He had determined to 'awake him out of sleep' before He left Peraea. But Martha's faith was the condition of her seeing the glory of God in the miracle. We may see a thousand emanations of that glory, and see none of it. We shall see it if we exercise faith. In the natural world, 'seeing is believing'; in the spiritual, believing is seeing.

Equally remarkable, as breathing serenest confidence, is the wonderful filial prayer. Our Lord speaks as if the miracle were already accomplished, so sure is He: 'Thou heardest Me.' Does this thanksgiving bring Him down to the level of other servants of God who have wrought miracles by divine power granted them? Certainly not; for it is in full accord with the teaching of all this Gospel, according to which 'the Son can do nothing of Himself,' but yet, whatsoever things the Father doeth, 'these also doeth the Son likewise.' Both sides of the truth must be kept in view. The Son is not independent of the Father, but the Son is so constantly and perfectly one with the Father that He is conscious of unbroken communion, of continual wielding of the whole divine power.

But the practical purpose of the thanksgiving is to be specially noted. It suspends His whole claims on the single issue about to be decided. It summons the people to mark the event. Never before had He thus heralded a miracle. Never had He deigned to say thus solemnly, 'If God does not work through Me now, reject Me as an impostor; if He does, yield to Me as Messiah.' The moment stands alone in His life. What a scene! There is the open tomb, with its dead occupant; there are the eager, sceptical crowd, the sisters pausing in their weeping to gaze, with some strange hopes beginning to creep into their hearts, the silent disciples, and, in front of them all, Jesus, with the radiance of power in the eyes that had just been swimming in tears, and a new elevation in His tones. How all would be hushed in expectance of the next moment's act!

III. The miracle itself is told in the fewest words. What more was there to tell? The two ends, as it were, of a buried chain, appear above ground. Cause and effect were brought together. Rather, here was no chain of many links, as in physical phenomena, but here was the life-giving word, and there was the dead man living again. The 'loud voice' was as needless as the rolling away of the stone. It was but the sign of Christ's will acting. And the acting of His will, without any other cause, produces physical effects.

Lazarus was far away from that rock cave. But, wherever he was, he could hear, and he must obey. So, with graveclothes entangling his feet, and a napkin about his livid face, he came stumbling out into the light that dazed his eyes, closed for four dark days, and stood silent and motionless in that awestruck crowd. One Person there was not awestruck. Christ's calm voice, that had just reverberated through the regions of the dead, spoke the simple command, 'Loose him, and let him go.' To Him it was no wonder that He should give back a life. For the Christ who wept is the Christ whose voice all that are in the graves shall hear, and shall come forth.

THE SEVENTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL—THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

'And when Jesus thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, Come forth. 44. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin.'—JOHN xi. 43, 44.

The series of our Lord's miracles before the Passion, as recorded in this Gospel, is fitly closed with the raising of Lazarus. It crowns the whole, whether we regard the greatness of the fact, the manner of our Lord's working, the minuteness and richness of the accompanying details, the revelation of our Lord's heart, the consolations which it suggests to sorrowing spirits, or the immortal hopes which it kindles.

And besides all this, the miracle is of importance for the development of the Evangelist's purpose, in that it makes the immediate occasion of the embittered hostility which finally precipitates the catastrophe of the Cross. Therefore the great length to which the narrative extends.

Of course it is impossible for us to attempt, even in the most cursory manner, to go over the whole. We must content ourselves with dealing with one or two of the salient points. And there are three things in this narrative which I think well worthy of our notice. There is the revelation of Christ as our Brother, by emotion and sorrow. There is the revelation of Christ as our Lord by His consciousness of divine power. There is the revelation of Christ as our Life by His mighty life-giving word. And to these three points I ask you to turn briefly.

I. First, then, we have here a revelation of Christ as our Brother, by emotion and sorrow.

This miracle stands alone in the whole majestic series of His mighty works by the fact that it is preceded by a storm of emotion, which shakes the frame of the Master, which He is represented by the Evangelist not so much as suppressing as fostering, and which diverges and parts itself into the two feelings expressed by His groans and by His tears. The word which is rendered in our version 'He groaned in the spirit,' and which is twice repeated in the narrative, is, according to the investigations of the most careful philological commentators, expressive not only of the outward sign of an emotion, but of the nature of it. And the nature of the emotion is not merely the grief and the sympathy which distilled in tears, but it is something deeper and other than that. The word contains in it at least a tinge of the passion of 'indignation' (as it is expressed in the margin of the Revised Version). What caused the indignation? Cannot we fancy how there rose up, as in pale, spectral procession before His vision, the whole long series of human sorrows and losses, of which one was visible there before Him? He saw, in the one individual case, the whole *genus*. He saw the whole mass represented there, the ocean in the drop, and He looked beyond the fact and linked it with its cause. And as there rose before Him the reality of man's desolation through sin, and the thought that all this misery, loss, pain, parting, death, was a contradiction of the divine purpose, and an interruption of God's order, and that it had all

been pulled down upon men's desperate heads by their own evil and their own folly, there rose in His heart the anger which is part of the perfectness of humanity when it looks upon sorrow linked by adamantine chains with sin.

But the lightning of the wrath dissolved soon into the rain of pity and of sorrow, and, as we read, 'Jesus wept.' Looking upon the weeping Mary and the lamenting crowd, and Himself feeling the pain of the parting from the friend whom He loved, the tears, which are the confession of human nature that it is passing through an emotion too deep for words, came to His all-seeing eyes.

Oh! brethren, surely—surely in this manifestation, or call it better, this revelation of Christ the Lord, expressed in these two emotions—surely there are large and blessed lessons for us! On them I can only touch in the lightest manner. Here, for one thing, is the blessed sign and proof of His true brotherhood with us. This Evangelist, to whom it was given to tell the Church and the world more than any of the others had imparted to them of the divine uniqueness of the Master's person, had also given to him in charge the corresponding and complementary message—to insist upon the reality and the verity of His manhood. His proclamation was 'the Word was made flesh,' and he had to dwell on both parts of that message, showing Him as the Word and showing Him as flesh. So he insists upon all the points which emerge in the course of his narrative that show the reality of Christ's corporeal manhood.

He joins with the others, who had no such lofty proclamation entrusted to them, in telling us how He was 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,' in that He hungered and thirsted and slept, and was wearied; how He was man, reasonable soul and human spirit, in that He grieved and rejoiced, and wondered and desired, and mourned and wept. And so we can look upon Him, and feel that this in very deed is One of ourselves, with a spirit participant of all human experiences, and a heart tremulously vibrating with every emotion that belongs to man.

Here we are also taught the sanction and the limits of sorrow. Christianity has nothing to do with the false Stoicism and the false religion which is partly pride and partly insincerity, that proclaims it wrong to weep when God smites. But just as clearly and distinctly as the story before us says to us, 'Weep for yourselves and for the loved ones that are gone,' so distinctly does it draw the limits within which sorrow is sacred and hallowing, and beyond which it is harmful and weakening. Set side by side the grief of these two poor weeping sisters, and the grief of the weeping Christ, and we get a large lesson. They could only repine that something else had not happened differently which would have made all different. 'If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.' One of the two sits with folded arms in the house, letting her sorrow flow over her pained head. Martha is unable, by reason of her grief, to grasp the consolation that is held out to her; her sorrow has made the hopes of the future seem to her very dim and of small account, and she puts away 'Thy brother shall rise again' with almost an impatient sweep of her hand. 'I know that he will rise in the resurrection at the last day. But oh! that is so far away, and what I want is present comfort.' Thus oblivious of duty, murmuring with regard to the accidents which might have been different, and unfitted to grasp the hopes that fill the future, these two have been hurt by their grief, and have let it overflow its banks and lay waste the land. But this Christ in His sorrow checks His sorrow that He may do His work; in His sorrow is

confident that the Father hears; in His sorrow thinks of the bystanders, and would bring comfort and cheer to them. A sorrow which makes us more conscious of communion with the Father who is always listening, which makes us more conscious of power to do that which He has put it into our hand to do, which makes us more tender in our sympathies with all that mourn, and swifter and readier for our work—such a sorrow is doing what God meant for us; and is a blessing in so thin a disguise that we can scarcely call it veiled at all.

And then, still further, there are here other lessons on which I cannot touch. Such, for instance, is the revelation in this emotion of the Master's, of a personal love that takes individuals to His heart, and feels all the sweetness and the power of friendship. That personal love is open to every one of us, and into the grace and the tenderness of it we may all penetrate. 'The disciple whom Jesus loved' is the Evangelist who, without jealousy, is glad to tell us that the same loving Lord took into the same sanctuary of His pure heart, Mary and Martha, and her brother. That which was given to them was not taken from him, and they each possessed the whole of the Master's love. So for every one of us that heart is wide open, and you and I, brethren, may contract such personal relations to the Master that we shall live with Christ as a man with his friend, and may feel that His heart is all ours.

So much for the lessons of the emotions whereby Christ is manifested to us as our Brother.

II. And now turn, in the next place, and that very briefly, to what lies side by side with this in the story, and at first sight may seem strangely contradictory of it, but in fact only completes the idea, viz. the majesties, calm consciousness of divine power by which He is revealed as our Lord.

At one step from the agitation and the storm of feeling there comes, 'Take ye away the stone.' And in answer to the lamentations of the sister are spoken the great and wonderful words, 'Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?' And He looks back there to the message that had been sent to the sisters in response to their unspoken hope that He would come, 'This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.' And He shows us that from the first moment, with the spontaneousness which, as I have already remarked in previous sermons on these 'signs,' characterises all the miracles of John's Gospel, 'He Himself knew what He would do,' and in the consciousness of His divine power had resolved that the dead Lazarus should be the occasion for the manifestation, the flashing out to the world, of the glory of God in the life-giving Son.

And then, in the same tone of majestic consciousness, there follows that thanksgiving *prior* to the miracle as for the accomplished miracle. 'I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' The best commentary upon these words, the deepest and the fullest exposition of the large truths that lie in them concerning the co-operation of the Father and the Son, is to be found in the passage from the fifth chapter of this Gospel, wherein there is set forth, drawn with the firmest hand, the clearest lines of truth upon this great and profound subject. 'The Son does nothing of Himself,' but 'whatsoever the Father doeth, that doeth the Son likewise.' A consciousness of continual co-

operation with the Almighty Father, a consciousness that His will continually coincides with the Father's will, that unto Him there comes the power ever to do all that Omnipotence can do, and that though we may speak of a gift given and a power derived, the relation between the giving Father and the recipient Son is altogether different from, and other than the relation between, the man that asks and the God that bestows. Poor Martha said, 'I know that even now, whatsoever Thou askest of God He will give Thee.' She thought of Him as a good Man whose prayers had power with Heaven. But up into an altogether other region soars the consciousness expressed in these words as of a divine Son whose work is wholly parallel with the Father's work, and of whom the two things that sound contradictory can both be said. His omnipotence is His own; His omnipotence is the Father's: 'As the Father hath life' and therefore power in Himself, 'so hath He *given*'—there is the one half of the paradox—'so hath He given to the Son to have life *in Himself*'; there is the other. And unless you put them both together you do not think of Christ as Christ has taught us to think.

III. Lastly, we have here the revelation of Christ as our Life in His mighty, life-giving word.

The miracle, as I have said, stands high in the scale, not only by reason of what to us seems the greatness of the fact, though of course, properly speaking, in miracles there is no distinction as to the greatness of the fact, but also by reason of the manner of the working. The voice thrown into the cave reaches the ears of the sheeted dead: 'Lazarus, come forth!' And then, in words which convey the profound impression of awfulness and solemnity which had been made upon the Evangelist, we have the picture of the man with the graveclothes wrapped about his limbs, stumbling forth; and loving hands are bidden to take away the napkin which covered his face. Perhaps the hand trembled as it was put forth, not knowing what awful sight the veil might cover.

With tenderest reticence, no word is spoken as to what followed. No hint escapes of the joy, no gleam of the experiences which the traveller brought back with him from that 'bourne' whence he had come. Surely some draught of Lethe must have been given him, that his spirit might be lulled into a wholesome forgetfulness, else life must have been a torment to him.

But be that as it may, what we have to notice is the fact here, and what it teaches us as a fact. Is it not a revelation of Jesus Christ as the absolute Lord of Life and Death, giving the one, putting back the other? Death has caught hold of his prey. 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered? Yea, the prey shall be taken from the mighty.' His bare word is divinely operative. He says to that grisly shadow 'Come!' and he cometh; He says to him 'Go!' and he goeth. And as a shepherd will drive away the bear that has a lamb between his bloody fangs, and the brute retreats, snarling and growling, but dropping his prey, so at the Lord's voice Lazarus comes back to life, and disappointed Death skulks away to the darkness.

The miracle shows Him as Lord of Death and Giver of Life. And it teaches another lesson, namely, the continuous persistency of the bond between Christ and His friend, unbroken and untouched by the superficial accident of life or death. Wheresoever Lazarus was he heard the voice, and wheresoever Lazarus was he knew the voice, and wheresoever

Lazarus was he obeyed the voice. And so we are taught that the relationship between Christ our life, and all them that love and trust Him, is one on which the tooth of death that gnaws all other bonds in twain hath no power at all. Christ is the Life, and, therefore, Christ is the Resurrection, and the thing that we call death is but a film which spreads on the surface, but has no power to penetrate into the depths of the relationship between us and Him.

Such, in briefest words, are the lessons of the miracle as a fact, but before I close I must remind you that it is to be looked at not only as a fact, but as a prophecy and as a parable.

It is a prophecy in a modified sense, telling us at all events that He has the power to bid men back from the dust and darkness, and giving us the assurance which His own words convey to us yet more distinctly: 'The hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth.' My brother! there be two resurrections in that one promise: the resurrection of Christ's friends and the resurrection of Christ's foes. And though to both His voice will be the awakening, some shall rise to joy and immortality and 'some to shame and everlasting contempt.' You will hear the voice; settle it for yourselves whether when He calls and thou answerest thou wilt say, 'Lo! here am I,' joyful to look upon Him; or whether thou wilt rise reluctant, and 'call upon the rocks and the hills to cover thee, and to hide thee from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne.'

And this raising is a parable as well as a prophecy; for even as Christ was the life of this Lazarus, so, in a deeper and more real sense, and not in any shadowy, metaphorical, mystical sense, is Jesus Christ the life of every spirit that truly lives at all. We are 'dead in trespasses and sins.' For separation from God is death in all regions, death for the body in its kind, death for the mind, for the soul, for the spirit in their kinds; and only they who receive Christ into their hearts do live. Every Christian man is a miracle. There has been a true coming into the human of the divine, a true supernatural work, the infusion into a dead soul of the God-life which is the Christ-life.

And you and I may have that life. What is the condition? 'They that hear shall live.' Do you hear? Do you welcome? Do you take that Christ into your hearts? Is He your Life, my brother?

It is possible to resist that voice, to stuff your ears so full of clay, and worldliness, and sin, and self-reliance as that it shall not echo in your hearts. 'The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live,' and obtain to-day 'a better resurrection' than the resurrection of the body. If you do not hear that voice, then you will 'remain in the congregation of the dead.'

CAIAPHAS

'And one of them, named Caiaphas being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'—JOHN xi. 49,50.

The resurrection of Lazarus had raised a wave of popular excitement. Any stir amongst the people was dangerous, especially at the Passover time, which was nigh at hand, when Jerusalem would be filled with crowds of men, ready to take fire from any spark that might fall amongst them. So a hasty meeting of the principal ecclesiastical council of the Jews was summoned, in order to dismiss the situation, and concert measures for repressing the nascent enthusiasm. One might have expected to find there some disposition to inquire honestly into the claims of a Teacher who had such a witness to His claims as a man alive that had been dead. But nothing of the sort appears in their ignoble calculations. Like all weak men, they feel that 'something must be done' and are perfectly unable to say what. They admit Christ's miracles: 'This man doeth many miracles,' but they are not a bit the nearer to recognising His mission, being therein disobedient to their law and untrue to their office. They fear that any disturbance will bring Rome's heavy hand down on them, and lead to the loss of what national life they still possess. But even that fear is not patriotism nor religion. It is pure self-interest. 'They will take away *our* place'—the Temple, probably—'and our nation.' The holy things were, in their eyes, their special property. And so, at this supreme moment, big with the fate of themselves and of their nation, their whole anxiety is about personal interests. They hesitate, and are at a loss what to do.

But however they may hesitate, there is one man who knows his own mind—Caiaphas, the high priest. He has no doubt as to what is the right thing to do. He has the advantage of a perfectly clear and single purpose, and no sort of restraint of conscience or delicacy keeps him from speaking it out. He is impatient at their vacillation, and he brushes it all aside with the brusque and contemptuous speech: 'Ye know nothing at all!' 'The one point of view for us to take is that of our own interests. Let us have that clearly understood; when we once ask what is "expedient for us," there will be no doubt about the answer. This man must die. Never mind about His miracles, or His teaching, or the beauty of His character. His life is a perpetual danger to our prerogatives. I vote for death!' And so he clashes his advice down into the middle of their waverings, like a piece of iron into yielding water; and the strong man, restrained by no conscience, and speaking out cynically the thought that is floating in all their minds, but which they dare not utter, is master of the situation, and the resolve is taken. 'From that day forth' they determined to put Him to death.

But John regards this selfish, cruel advice as a prophecy. Caiaphas spoke wiser things than he knew. The Divine Spirit breathed in strange fashion through even such lips as his, and moulded his savage utterance into such a form as that it became a fit expression for the very deepest thought about the nature and the power of Christ's death. He did indeed die for that people—thinks the Evangelist—even though they have rejected Him, and the dreaded Romans *have* come and taken away our place and nation—but His death had a

wider purpose, and was not for that nation only, but that also 'He should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad.'

Let us, then, take these two aspects of the man and his counsel: the unscrupulous priest and his savage advice; the unconscious prophet and his great prediction.

I. First, then, let us take the former point of view, and think of this unscrupulous priest and his savage advice. 'It is expedient for us that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.'

Remember who he was, the high priest of the nation, with Aaron's mitre on his brow, and centuries of illustrious traditions embodied in his person; set by his very office to tend the sacred flame of their Messianic hopes, and with pure hands and heart to offer sacrifice for the sins of the people; the head and crown of the national religion, in whose heart justice and mercy should have found a sanctuary if they had fled from all others; whose ears ought to have been opened to the faintest whisper of the voice of God; whose lips should ever have been ready to witness for the truth.

And see what he is! A crafty schemer, as blind as a mole to the beauty of Christ's character and the greatness of His words; utterly unspiritual; undisguisedly selfish; rude as a boor; cruel as a cut-throat; and having reached that supreme height of wickedness in which he can dress his ugliest thought in the plainest words, and send them into the world unabashed. What a lesson this speech of Caiaphas, and the character disclosed by it, read to all persons who have a professional connection with religion!

He can take one point of view only, in regard to the mightiest spiritual revelation that the world ever saw; and that is, its bearing upon his own miserable personal interests, and the interests of the order to which he belongs. And so, whatever may be the wisdom, or miracles, or goodness of Jesus, because He threatens the prerogatives of the priesthood, He must die and be got out of the way.

This is only an extreme case of a temper and a tendency which is perennial. Popes and inquisitors and priests of all Churches have done the same, in their degree, in all ages. They have always been tempted to look upon religion and religious truth and religious organisations as existing somehow for their personal advantage. And so 'the Church is in danger!' generally means 'my position is threatened,' and heretics are got rid of, because their teaching is inconvenient for the prerogatives of a priesthood, and new truth is fought against, because officials do not see how it harmonises with their pre-eminence.

It is not popes and priests and inquisitors only that are examples of the tendency. The warning is needed by every man who stands in such a position as mine, whose business it is professionally to handle sacred things, and to administer Christian institutions and Christian ritual. All such men are tempted to look upon the truth as their stock-in-trade, and to fight against innovations, and to array themselves instinctively against progress, and frown down new aspects and new teachers of truth, simply because they threaten, or appear to threaten, the position and prerogatives of the teachers that be. Caiaphas's sin is possible, and Caiaphas's temptation is actual, for every man whose profession it is to handle the oracles of God.

But the lessons of this speech and character are for us all. Caiaphas's sentence is an undisguised, unblushing avowal of a purely selfish standpoint. It is not a common depth of

degradation to stand up, and without a blush to say: 'I look at all claims of revelation, at all professedly spiritual truth, and at everything else, from one delightfully simple point of view—I ask myself, how does it bear upon what I think to be to my advantage?' What a deal of perplexity a man is saved if he takes up that position! Yes! and how he has damned himself in the very act of doing it! For, look what this absorbing and exclusive self-regard does in the illustration before us, and let us learn what it will do to ourselves.

This selfish consideration of our own interests will make us as blind as bats to the most radiant beauty of truth; aye, and to Christ Himself, if the recognition of Him and of His message seems to threaten any of these. They tell us that fishes which live in the water of caverns come to lose their eyesight; and men that are always living in the dark holes of their own selfishly absorbed natures, they, too, lose their spiritual sight; and the fairest, loftiest, truest, and most radiant visions (which are realities) pass before their eyes, and they see them not. When you put on regard for yourselves as they do blinkers upon horses, you have no longer the power of wide, comprehensive vision, but only see straight forward upon the narrow line which you fancy to be marked out by your own interests. If ever there comes into the selfish man's mind a truth, or an aspect of Christ's mission, which may seem to cut against some of his practices or interests, how blind he is to it! When Lord Nelson was at Copenhagen, and they hoisted the signal of recall, he put his telescope up to his blind eye and said, 'I do not see it!' And that is exactly what this self-absorbed regard to our own interests does with hundreds of men who do not in the least degree know it. It blinds them to the plain will of the Commander-in-chief flying there at the masthead. 'There are none so blind as those who will not see'; and there are none who so certainly will not see as those who have an uneasy suspicion that if they do see they will have to change their tack. So I say, look at the instance before us, and learn the lesson of the blindness to truth and beauty which are Christ Himself, which comes of a regard to one's own interests.

Then again, this same self-regard may bring a man down to any kind and degree of wrongdoing. Caiaphas was brought down by it, being the supreme judge of his nation, to be an assassin and an accomplice of murderers. And it is only a question of accident and of circumstances how far that man will descend who once yields himself up to the guidance of such a disposition and tendency. We have all of us to fight against the developed selfishness which takes the form of this, that, and the other sin; and we have all of us, if we are wise, to fight against the undeveloped sin which lies in all selfishness. Remember that if you begin with laying down as the canon of your conduct, 'It is expedient for me,' you have got upon an inclined plane that tilts at a very sharp angle, and is very sufficiently greased, and ends away down yonder in the depths of darkness and of death, and it is only a question of time how far and how fast, how deep and irrevocable, will be your descent.

And lastly, this same way of looking at things which takes 'It is expedient' as the determining consideration, has in it an awful power of so twisting and searing a man's conscience as that he comes to look at evil and never to know that there is anything wrong in it. This cynical high priest in our text had no conception that he was doing anything but obeying the plainest dictates of the most natural self-preservation when he gave his opinion that they had better kill Christ than have any danger to their priesthood. The crime of the actual crucifixion was diminished because the doers were so unconscious that it was a crime; but the crime of the process by which they had come to be unconscious—Oh how

that was increased and deepened! So, if we fix our eyes sharply and exclusively on what makes for our own advantage, and take that as the point of view from which we determine our conduct, we may, and we shall, bring ourselves into such a condition as that our consciences will cease to be sensitive to right and wrong; and we shall do all manner of bad things, and never know it. We shall 'wipe our mouths and say: "I have done no harm."' So, I beseech you, remember this, that to live for self is hell, and that the only antagonist of such selfishness, which leads to blindness, crime, and a seared conscience, is to yield ourselves to the love of God in Jesus Christ and to say: 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.'

II. And now turn briefly to the second aspect of this saying, into which the former, if I may so say, melts away. We have the unconscious prophet and his great prediction.

The Evangelist conceives that the man who filled the office of high priest, being the head of the theocratic community, was naturally the medium of a divine oracle. When he says, 'being the high priest *that year*, Caiaphas prophesied,' he does not imply that the high priestly office was annual, but simply desires to mark the fateful importance of that year for the history of the world and the priesthood. 'In that year' the great 'High Priest for ever' came and stood for a moment by the side of the earthly high priest—the Substance by the shadow—and by His offering of Himself as the one Sacrifice for sin for ever, deprived priesthood and sacrifice henceforward of all their validity. So that Caiaphas was in reality the last of the high priests, and those that succeeded him for something less than half a century were but like ghosts that walked after cock-crow. And what the Evangelist would mark is the importance of 'that year,' as making Caiaphas ever memorable to us. Solemn and strange that the long line of Aaron's priesthood ended in such a man—the river in a putrid morass—and that of all the years in the history of the nation, 'in that year' should such a person fill such an office!

'Being high priest he prophesied.' And was there anything strange in a bad man's prophesying? Did not the Spirit of God breathe through Balaam of old? Is there anything incredible in a man's prophesying unconsciously? Did not Pilate do so, when he nailed over the Cross, 'This is the King of the Jews,' and wrote it in Hebrew, and in Greek, and in Latin, conceiving himself to be perpetrating a rude jest, while he was proclaiming an everlasting truth? When the Pharisees stood at the foot of the Cross and taunted Him, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,' did they not, too, speak deeper things than they knew? And were not the lips of this unworthy, selfish, unspiritual, unscrupulous, cruel priest so used as that, all unconsciously, his words lent themselves to the proclamation of the glorious central truth of Christianity, that Christ died for the nation that slew Him and rejected Him, nor for them alone, but for all the world? Look, though but for a moment, at the thoughts that come from this new view of the words which we have been considering.

They suggest to us, first of all, the twofold aspect of Christ's death. From the human point of view it was a savage murder by forms of law for political ends: Caiaphas and the priests slaying Him to avoid a popular tumult that might threaten their prerogatives, Pilate consenting to His death to avoid the unpopularity that might follow a refusal. From the divine point of view it is God's great sacrifice for the sin of the world. It is the most signal instance of that solemn law of Providence which runs all through the history of the world, whereby bad men's bad deeds, strained through the fine network, as it were, of the divine providence, lose their poison and become nutritious and fertilising. 'Thou makest the wrath

of men to praise Thee; with the residue thereof Thou girdest Thyself.' The greatest crime ever done in the world is the greatest blessing ever given to the world. Man's sin works out the loftiest divine purpose, even as the coral insects blindly build up the reef that keeps back the waters, or as the sea in its wild, impotent rage, seeking to overwhelm the land, only throws upon the beach a barrier that confines its waves and curbs their fury.

Then, again, this second aspect of the counsel of Caiaphas suggests for us the twofold consequences of that death on the nation itself. This Gospel of John was probably written after the destruction of Jerusalem. By the time that our Evangelist penned these words, the Romans *had* come and taken away their place and their nation. The catastrophe that Caiaphas and his party had, by their short-sighted policy, tried to prevent, had been brought about by the very deed itself. For Christ's death was practically the reason for the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth. When 'the husbandmen said, Come! let us kill Him, and seize on the inheritance,' which is simply putting Caiaphas's counsel into other language, they thereby deprived themselves of the inheritance. And so Christ's death was the destruction and not the salvation of the nation.

And yet, it was true that He died for that people, for every man of them, for Caiaphas as truly as for John, for Judas as truly as for Peter, for all the Scribes and the Pharisees that mocked round His Cross, as truly as for the women that stood silently weeping there. He died for them all, and John, looking back upon the destruction of his nation, can yet say, 'He died for that people.' Yes! and just because He did, and because they rejected Him, His death, which they would not let be their salvation, became their destruction and their ruin. Oh! brethren, it is always so! He is either 'a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death!' 'Behold! I lay in Zion for a foundation, a tried Stone.' Build upon it and you are safe. If you do not build upon it, that Stone becomes 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.' You must either build upon Christ or fall over Him; you must either build *upon* Christ, or be crushed to powder *under* Him. Make your choice! The twofold effect is wrought ever, but we can choose which of the two shall be wrought upon us.

Lastly, we have here the twofold sphere in which our Lord's mighty death works its effects.

I have already said that this Gospel was written after the fall of Jerusalem. The whole tone of it shows that the conception of the Church as quite separate from Judaism was firmly established. The narrower national system had been shivered, and from out of the dust and hideous ruin of its crushing fall had emerged the fairer reality of a Church as wide as the world. The Temple on Zion—which was but a small building after all—had been burned with fire. It was *their* place, as Caiaphas called it. But the clearing away of the narrower edifice had revealed the rising walls of the great temple, the Christian Church, whose roof overarches every land, and in whose courts all men may stand and praise the Lord. So John, in his home in Ephesus, surrounded by flourishing churches in which Jews formed a small and ever-decreasing element, recognised how far the dove with the olive-branch In its mouth flew, and how certainly that nation was only a little fragment of the many for whom Christ died.

'The children of God that were scattered abroad' were all to be united round that Cross. Yes! the only thing that unites men together is their common relation to a Divine Redeemer.

That bond is deeper than all national bonds, than all blood-bonds, than community of race, than family, than friendship, than social ties, than community of opinion, than community of purpose and action. It is destined to absorb them all. All these are transitory and they are imperfect; men wander isolated notwithstanding them all. But if we are knit to Christ, we are knit to all who are also knit to Him. One life animates all the limbs, and one life's blood circulates through all the veins. 'So also is Christ.' We are one in Him, in whom all the body fitly joined together maketh increase, and in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth. If we have yielded to the power of that Cross which draws us to itself, we shall have been more utterly alone, in our penitence and in our conscious surrender to Christ, than ever we were before. But He sets the solitary in families, and that solemn experience of being alone with our Judge and our Saviour will be followed by the blessed sense that we are no more solitary, but 'fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.'

That death brings men into the *family* of God. He will 'gather into one the scattered children of God.' They are called children by anticipation. For surely nothing can be clearer than that the doctrine of all John's writings is that men are not children of God by virtue of their humanity, except in the inferior sense of being made by Him, and in His image as creatures with spirit and will, but *become* children of God through faith in the Son of God, which brings about that new birth, whereby we become partakers of the Divine nature. 'To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.'

So I beseech you, turn yourselves to that dear Christ who has died for us all, for us each, for me and for thee, and put your confidence in His great sacrifice. You will find that you pass from isolation into society, from death into life, from the death of selfishness into the life of God. Listen to Him, who says: 'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one flock' because there is 'one Shepherd.'

LOVE'S PRODIGALITY CENSURED AND VINDICATED

'Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.'—JOHN xii. 1-11.

Jesus came from Jericho, where He had left Zacchaeus rejoicing in the salvation that had come to his house, and whence Bartimaeus, rejoicing in His new power of vision, seems to have followed Him. A few hours brought Him to Bethany, and we know from other Evangelists what a tension of purpose marked Him, and awed the disciples, as He pressed on before them up the rocky way. His mind was full of the struggle and death which were so near. The modest village feast in the house of Simon the leper comes in strangely amid the gathering gloom; but, no doubt, Jesus accepted it, as He did everything, and entered into the spirit of the hour. He would not pain His hosts by self-absorbed aloofness at the table. The reason for the feast is obviously the raising of Lazarus, as is suggested by his being twice mentioned in verses 1 and 2.

Our Lord had withdrawn to Ephraim so immediately after the miracle that the opportunity of honouring Him had not occurred. It was a brave tribute to pay Him in the face of the Sanhedrim's commandment (ch. xi. 57). This incident sets in sharpest contrast the two figures of Mary, the type of love which delights to give its best, and Judas, the type of selfishness which is only eager to get; and it shows us Jesus casting His shield over the uncalculating giver, and putting meaning into her deed.

I. In Eastern fashion, the guests seem to have all been males, no doubt the magnates of the village, and Jesus with His disciples. The former would have become accustomed to seeing Lazarus, but Christ's immediate followers would gaze curiously on him. And how he would gaze on Jesus, whom he had probably not seen since the napkin had been taken from his face. The two sisters were true to their respective characters. The bustling, practical Martha had perhaps not very fine or quickly moved emotions. She could not say graceful things to their benefactor, and probably she did not care to sit at His feet and drink in His teaching; but she loved Him with all her heart all the same, and showed it by serving. No doubt, she took care that the best dishes were carried to Jesus first, and, no doubt, as is the

custom in those lands, she plied Him with invitations to partake. We do Martha less than justice if we do not honour her, and recognise that her kind of service is true service. She has many successors among Christ's true followers, who cannot 'gush' nor rise to the heights of His loftiest teaching, but who have taken Him for their Lord, and can, at any rate, do humble, practical service in kitchen or workshop. Their more 'intellectual' or poetically emotional brethren are tempted to look down on them, but Jesus is as ready to defend Martha against Mary, if she depreciates her, as He is to vindicate Mary's right to her kind of expression of love, if Martha should seek to force her own kind on her sister. 'There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.'

Mary was one of the unpractical sort, whom Martha is very apt to consider supremely useless, and often to lose patience with. Could she not find something useful to do in all the bustle of the feast? Had she no hands that could carry a dish, and no common sense that could help things on? Apparently not. Every one else was occupied, and how should she show the love that welled up in her heart as she looked at Lazarus sitting there beside Jesus? She had one costly possession, the pound of perfume. Clearly it was her own, for she would not have taken it if Lazarus and Mary had been joint owners. So, without thinking of anything but the great burden of love which she blessedly bore, she 'poured it on His head' (Mark) and on His feet, which the fashion of reclining at meals made accessible to her, standing behind Him, True love is profuse, not to say prodigal. It knows no better use for its best than to lavish it on the beloved, and can have no higher joy than that. It does not stay to calculate utility as seen by colder eyes. It has even a subtle delight in the very absence of practical results, for the expression of itself is the purer thereby. A basin of water and a towel would have done as well or better for washing Christ's feet, but not for relieving Mary's full heart. Do we know anything of that omnipotent impulse? Can we complacently set our givings beside Mary's?

II. Judas is the foil to Mary. His sullen, black selfishness, stretching out hands like talons in eagerness to get, makes more radiant, and is itself made darker by, her shining deed of love. Goodness always rouses evil to self-assertion, and the other Evangelists connect Mary's action with Judas's final treachery as part of its impelling cause. They also show that his specious objection, by its apparent common sense and charitableness, found assent in the disciples. Three hundred pence worth of good ointment wasted which might have helped so many poor! Yes, and how much poorer the world would have been if it had not had this story! Mary was more utilitarian than her censors. She served the highest good of all generations by her uncalculating profusion, by which the poor have gained more than some few of them might have lost.

Judas's criticism is still repeated. The world does not understand Christian self-sacrifice, for ends which seem to it shadowy as compared with the solid realities of helping material progress or satisfying material wants. A hundred critics, who do not do much for the poor themselves, will descant on the waste of money in religious enterprises, and smile condescendingly at the enthusiasts who are so unpractical. But love knows its own meaning, and need not be abashed by the censure of the unloving.

John flashes out into a moment's indignation at the greed of Judas, which was masquerading as benevolence. His scathing laying bare of Judas's mean and thievish motive is no mere suspicion, but he must have known instances of dishonesty. When a man has

gone so far in selfish greed that he has left common honesty behind him, no wonder if the sight of utterly self-surrendering love looks to him folly. The world has no instruments by which it can measure the elevation of the godly life. Mary would not be Mary if Judas approved of her or understood her.

III. Jesus vindicates the act of His censured servant. His words fall into two parts, of which the former puts a meaning into Mary's act, of which she probably had not been aware, while the latter meets the carping criticism of Judas. That Jesus should see in the anointing a reference to His burying, pathetically indicates how that near end filled His thoughts, even while sharing in the simple feast. The clear vision of the Cross so close did not so absorb Him as to make Him indifferent either to Mary's love or to the villagers' humble festivity. However weighed upon, His heart was always sufficiently at leisure from itself to care for His friends and to defend them. He accepts every offering that love brings, and, in accepting, gives it a significance beyond the offerer's thought. We know not what use He may make of our poor service; but we may be sure that, if that which we can see to is right—namely, its motive,—He will take care of what we cannot see to—namely, its effect,—and will find noble use for the sacrifices which unloving critics pronounce useless waste.

'The poor always ye have with you.' Opportunities for the exercise of brotherly liberality are ever present, and therefore the obligation to it is constant. But these permanent duties do not preclude the opportunities for such special forms of expressing special love to Jesus as Mary had shown, and as must soon end. The same sense of approaching separation as in the former clause gives pathos to that restrained 'not always.' The fact of His being just about to leave them warranted extraordinary tokens of love, as all loving hearts know but too well. But, over and above the immediate reference of the words, they carry the wider lesson that, besides the customary duties of generous giving laid on us by the presence of ordinary poverty and distresses, there is room in Christian experience for extraordinary outflows from the fountain of a heart filled with love to Christ. The world may mock at it as useless prodigality, but Jesus sees that it is done for Him, and therefore He accepts it, and breathes meaning into it.

'Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.' The Evangelist who records that promise does not mention Mary's name; John, who does mention the name, does not record the promise. It matters little whether our names are remembered, so long as Jesus beam them graven on His heart.

A NEW KIND OF KING

'On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him. The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing! behold, the world is gone after Him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus, and Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour.'—JOHN xii. 12-26.

The difference between John's account of the entry into Jerusalem and those of the Synoptic Gospels is very characteristic. His is much briefer, but it brings the essentials out clearly, and is particular in showing its place as a link in the chain that drew on the final catastrophe, and in noting its effect on various classes.

'The next day' in verse 12 was probably the Sunday before the crucifixion. To understand the events of that day we must try to realise how rapidly, and, as the rulers thought, dangerously, excitement was rising among the crowds who had come up for the Passover, and who had heard of the raising of Lazarus. The Passover was always a time when national feeling was ready to blaze up, and any spark might light the fire. It looked as if Lazarus were going to be the match this time, and so, on the Saturday, the rulers had made up their minds to have him put out of the way in order to stop the current that was setting in, of acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

They had already made up their minds to dispose of Jesus, and now, with cynical contempt for justice, they determined to 'put Lazarus also to death.' So there were to be two men who were to 'die for the people.' Keeping all this wave of popular feeling in view, it might have been expected that Jesus would, as hitherto, have escaped into privacy, or discouraged the offered homage of a crowd whose Messianic ideal was so different from His.

John is mainly concerned in bringing out two points in his version of the incident. First, he tells us what we should not have gathered from the other Evangelists, that the triumphal procession began in Jerusalem, not in Bethany. It was the direct result of the ebullition of enthusiasm occasioned by the raising of Lazarus. The course of events seems to have been that 'the common people of the Jews' came streaming out to Bethany on the Sunday to gape and gaze at the risen man and Him who had raised him, that they and some of those who had been present at the raising went back to the city and carried thither the intelligence that Jesus was coming in from Bethany next day, and that then the procession to meet Him was organised.

The meaning of the popular demonstration was plain, both from the palm branches, signs of victory and rejoicing, and from the chant, which is in part taken from Psalm cxviii. The Messianic application of that quotation is made unmistakable by the addition, 'even the King of Israel.' In the Psalm, 'he that cometh in the name of Jehovah,' means the worshipper drawing near to the Temple, but the added words divert the expression to Jesus, hail Him as the King, and invoke Him as 'Saviour.' Little did that shouting crowd understand what sort of a Saviour He was. Deliverance from Rome was what they were thinking of.

We must remember what gross, unspiritual notions of the Messiah they had, and then we are prepared to feel how strangely unlike His whole past conduct Jesus' action now was. He had shrunk from crowds and their impure enthusiasm; He had slipped away into solitude when they wished to come by force to make Him a King, and had in every possible way sought to avoid publicity and the rousing of popular excitement. Now He deliberately sets Himself to intensify it. His choice of an ass on which to ride into Jerusalem was, and would be seen by many to be, a plain appropriation to Himself of a very distinct Messianic prophecy, and must have raised the heat of the crowd by many degrees. One can fancy the roar of acclaim which hailed Him when He met the multitude, and the wild emotion with which they strewed His path with garments hastily drawn off and cast before Him.

Why did He thus contradict all His past, and court the smoky enthusiasm which He had hitherto damped? Because He knew that 'His hour' had come, and that the Cross was at hand, and He desired to bring it as speedily as might be, and thus to shorten the suffering that He would not avoid, and to finish the work which He was eager to complete. The impatience, as we might almost call it, which had marked Him on all that last journey, reached its height now, and may indicate to us for our sympathy and gratitude both His human longing to get the dark hour over and His fixed willingness to die for us.

But even while Jesus accepted the acclamations and deliberately set Himself to stir up enthusiasm, He sought to purify the gross ideas of the crowd. What more striking way could He have chosen of declaring that all the turbulent passions and eagerness for a foot-to-foot conflict with Rome which were boiling in their breasts were alien to His purposes and to the true Messianic ideal, than that choosing of the meek, slow-pacing ass to bear Him? A conquering king would have made his triumphal entry in a chariot or on a battle-horse. This strange type of monarch is throned on an ass. It was not only for a verbal fulfilment of the prophecy, but for a demonstration of the essential nature of His kingdom, that He thus entered the city.

John characteristically takes note of the effects of the entry on two classes, the disciples and the rulers. The former remembered with a sudden flash of enlightenment the meaning of the entry when the Cross and the Resurrection had taught them it. The rulers marked the popular feeling running high with bewilderment, and were, as Jesus meant them to be, made more determined to take vigorous measures to stop this madness of the mob.

The second incident in this passage contrasts remarkably with the first, and yet is, in one aspect, a continuation of it. In the former, Jesus brought into prominence the true nature of His rule by His choosing the ass to carry Him, so declaring that His dominion rested, not on conquest, but on meekness. In the latter, He reveals a yet deeper aspect of His work, and teaches that His influence over men is won by utter self-sacrifice, and that His subjects must tread the same path of losing their lives by which He passes to His glory. The details of the incident are of small importance as compared with that great and solemn lesson; but we may note them in a few words. The desire of a few Greeks to see Him was probably only a reflection of the popular enthusiasm, and was prompted mainly by curiosity and the characteristic Greek eagerness to see any 'new thing.' The addressing of the request to Philip is perhaps explained by the fact that he 'was of Bethsaida of Galilee,' and had probably come into contact with these Greeks in the neighbouring Decapolis, on the other side of the lake. Philip's consultation of his fellow-townsman, Andrew, who is associated with him in other places, probably implies hesitation in granting so unprecedented a request. They did not know what Jesus might say to it. And what He did say was very unlike anything that they could have anticipated.

The trivial request was as a narrow window through which Jesus' yearning spirit saw a great expanse—nothing less than the coming to Him of myriads of Gentiles, the 'much fruit' of which He immediately speaks, the 'other sheep' whom He 'must bring.' The thought must have been ever present to Him, or it would never have leaped to utterance on such an occasion. The little window shows us, too, what was habitually in His mind and heart. He, as it were, hears the striking of the hour of His glorification; in which expression the ideas of His being glorified by drawing men to the knowledge of His love, and of the Cross being not the lowest depth of His humiliation, but the highest apex of His glory—as it is always represented in this Gospel—seemed to be fused together.

The seed must die if a harvest is to spring from it. That is the law for all moral and spiritual reformations. Every cause must have its martyrs. No man can be fruit-bearing unless he sacrifices himself. We shall not 'quicken' our fellows unless we 'die,' either literally or by the not less real martyrdom of rigid self-crucifixion and suppression.

But that necessity is not only for Apostles or missionaries of great causes; it is the condition of all true, noble life, and prescribes the path not only for those who would live for others, but for all who would truly live their own lives. Self-renunciation guards the way to the 'tree of life.' That lesson was specially needed by 'Greeks,' for ignorance of it was the worm that gnawed the blossoms of their trees, whether of art or of literature. It is no less needed by our sensuously luxurious and eagerly acquisitive generation. The world's war-cries to-day are two—'Get!' 'Enjoy!' Christ's command is, 'Renounce!' And in renouncing we shall realise both of these other aims, which they who pursue them only, never attain.

Christ's servant must be Christ's follower: indeed service is following. The Cross has aspects in which it stands alone, and is incapable of being reproduced and makes all repetition needless. But it has also an aspect in which it not only *may*, but *must*, be reproduced in every disciple. And he who takes it for the ground of his trust only, and not as the pattern of his life, has need to ask himself whether his trust in it is genuine or worth anything. Of course they who follow a leader will arrive where the leader has gone, and though our feet are feeble and our progress devious and slow, we have here His promise that we shall not be lost in the desert, but, sustained by Him, will reach His side, and at last be where He is.

AFTER CHRIST: WITH CHRIST

'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.'—John xii. 26.

Our Lord was strangely moved by the apparently trivial incident of certain Greeks desiring to see Him. He recognised and hailed in them the first-fruits of the Gentiles. The Eastern sages at His cradle, and these representatives of Western culture within a few hours of the Cross, were alike prophets. So, in His answer to their request, our Lord passes beyond the immediate bearing of the request, and contemplates it in its relation to the future developments of His work. And the thought that the Son of Man is now about to begin to be glorified, at once brings Him face to face with the fact which must precede the glory, viz., His death.

That great law that a higher life can only be reached by the decay of the lower, of which the Cross is the great instance, He illustrates, first, by an example from Nature, the corn of wheat which must die ere it brings forth fruit. Then He declares that this is a universal law, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' And then He declares that this universal law, which has its adumbration in Nature, and applies to all mankind, and is manifested in its highest form on the Cross, is the law of the Christian discipleship. 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,' and, as a consequence, 'where I am, there shall also My servant be.'

In two clauses He covers the whole ground of the present and the future. Many thinkers and teachers have tried to crystallise their systems into some brief formula which may stick in the memory and be capable of a handy application. 'Follow Nature,' said ancient sages, attaching a nobler meaning to the condensed commandment than its modern repeaters often do; 'Follow duty,' say others; 'Follow *Me*' says Christ. That is enough for life. And for all the dim regions beyond, this prospect is sufficient, 'Where I am, there shall also My servant be.' One Form towers above the present and the future, and they both derive their colouring and their worth from Him and our relation to Him. 'To follow'—that is the condensed summary of life's duty. 'To be with'—that is the crystallising of all our hopes.

I. The all-sufficient law for life.

'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.' Everything is smelted down into that; and there you have a sufficient directory for every man's every action.

Now although it has nothing to do with my present purpose, I can scarcely avoid pausing, just for a moment, to ask you to consider the perfect uniqueness of such an utterance as that. Think of one Man standing up before all mankind, and coolly and deliberately saying to them, 'I am the realised Ideal of human conduct; I am Incarnate Perfection; and all of you, in all the infinite variety of condition, culture, and character, are to take Me for your pattern and your guide.' The world has listened, and the world has not laughed nor been angry. Neither indignation nor mockery, which one might have expected would have extinguished such absurdity, has waited upon Christ's utterance. I have no time to dwell on this; it is

apart from my purpose, but I would ask you fairly to consider how strange it is, and to ask how it is to be accounted for, that a Man said that, and that the wisest part of the world has consented to take Him at His own valuation; and after such an utterance as that, yet calls Him 'meek and lowly of heart.'

But I pass away from that. What does He mean by this commandment, 'Follow Me'? Of course I need not remind you that it brings all duty down to the imitation of Jesus Christ. That is a commonplace that I do not need to dwell upon, nor to follow out into the many regions into which it would lead us, and where we might find fruitful subjects of contemplation; because I desire, in a sentence or two, to insist upon the special form of following which is here enjoined. It is a very grand thing to talk about the imitation of Christ, and even in its most superficial acceptation it is a good guide for all men. But no man has penetrated to the depths of that stringent and all-comprehensive commandment who has not recognised that there is one special thing in which Christ is to be our Pattern, and that is in regard to the very thing in which we think that He is most unique and inimitable. It is His Cross, and not His life; it is His death, and not His virtues, which He is here thinking about, and laying it upon all of us as the encyclopaedia and sum of all morality that we should be conformed to it. I have already pointed out to you in my introductory remarks the force of the present context. And so I need not further enlarge upon that, nor vindicate my declaration that Christ's death is the pattern which is here set before us. Of course we cannot imitate that in its effects, except in a very secondary and figurative fashion. But the spirit that underlay it, as the supreme Example of self-sacrifice, is commended to us all as the royal law for our lives, and unless we are conformed thereto we have no right to call ourselves Christ's disciples. To die for the sake of higher life, to give up our own will utterly in obedience to God, and in the unselfish desire to help and bless others, that is the *Alpha* and the *Omega* of discipleship. It always has been so and always will be so. And so, dear brethren, let us lay it to our own hearts, and make very stringent inquiry into our own conduct, whether we have ever come within sight of what makes a true disciple—viz., that we should be 'conformable unto His death.'

Now our modern theology has far too much obscured this plain teaching of the New Testament, because it has been concerned—I do not say too much, but too exclusively, concerned—in setting forth the other aspect of Christ's death, by which it is what none of ours can ever even begin to be, the sacrifice for a world's sin. But, mind, there are two ways of looking at Christ's Cross. You must begin with recognising it as the basis of all your hope, the power by which you are delivered from sin as guilt, habit, and condemnation. And then you must take it, if it is to be the sacrifice and atonement for your sins, for the example of your lives, and mould yourselves after it. 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me,' and here is the special region in which the following is to be realised: 'He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.'

Now, further, let me remind you that this brief, crystallised commandment, the essence of all practical godliness and Christianity, makes the blessed peculiarity of Christian morality. People ask what it is that distinguishes the teaching of the New Testament in regard to duty, from the teaching of lofty moralists and sages of old. Not the specific precepts, though these are, in many cases, deeper. Not the individual commandments, though the perspective of human excellences and virtues has been changed in Christianity,

and the gentler and sweeter graces have been enthroned in the place where the world's morality has generally set the more ostentatious ones; the hero is, roughly speaking, the world's type, the saint is the New Testament's. But the true characteristic of Christian teaching as to conduct lies in this, that the law is in a Person, and that the power to obey the law comes from the love of the Person. All things are different; unwelcome duties are made less repulsive, and hard tasks are lightened, and sorrows are made tolerable, if only we are following Him. You remember the old story in Scottish history of the knight to whom was entrusted the king's heart; how, beset by the bands of the infidels, he tossed the golden casket into the thickest of their ranks and said, 'Go on, I follow thee'; and death itself was light when that thought spurred his steed forward.

And so, brethren, it is far too hard a task to tread the road of duty which our consciences command us, unless we are drawn by Him Who is before us there on the road, and see the shining of His garments as He sets His face forward, and draws us after Him. It is easy to climb a glacier when the guide has cut with his ice-axe the steps in which he sets his feet, and we may set ours. The sternness of duty, and the rigidity of law, and the coldness of 'I ought,' are all changed when duty consists in following Christ, and He is before us on the rocky and narrow road.

This precept is all-sufficient. Of course it will be a task of wisdom, of common sense, of daily culture in prudence and other graces; to apply the generalised precept to the specific cases that emerge in our lives. But whilst the application may require a great many subordinate by-laws, the royal statute is one, and simple, and enough. 'Follow Me.' Is it not a strange thing—it seems to me to be a perfectly unique thing, inexplicable except upon one hypothesis—that a life so brief, of which the records are so fragmentary, in which some of the relationships in which we stand had no place, and which was lived out in a world so utterly different from our own, should yet avail to be a guide to men, not in regard to specific points, so much as in regard to the imperial supremacy in it of these motives—Even Christ pleased not Himself; 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.'

And so, brethren, take this sharp test and apply it honestly to your own lives, day by day, in all their *minutiae* as well as in their great things. 'If any man *serve* Me,' how miserably that Christian 'service' has been evacuated of its deepest meaning, and superficialised and narrowed! 'Service'—that means people getting into a building and singing and praying. Service—that means acts of beneficence, teaching and preaching and giving material or spiritual helps of various kinds. These things have almost monopolised the word. But Christ enlarges its shrivelled contents once more, and teaches us that, far above all specifically so-called acts of religious worship, and more indispensable than so-called acts of Christian activity and service, lies the self-sacrificing conformity of character to Him. 'If any man serve Me,' let him sing and praise and pray? Yes; 'If any man serve Me,' let him try to help other people, and in the service of man do service to Me? Yes; but deeper than all, and fundamental to the others, 'If any man serve Me, let him *follow* Me'—Is that *my* discipleship? Let each one of us professing Christians ask himself.

II. We have here the all-sufficient hope for the future.

I know few things more beautiful than the perfectly *naive* way in which the greatest of thoughts is here set forth by the simplest of figures. If two men are walking on the same

road to a place, the one that is in front will get there first, and his friend that is coming up after him will get there second, if he keeps on; and they will be united at the end, because, one after the other, they travel the road. And so says Christ: 'Of course, if you follow Me, you will join Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be.' The implications of a Christian life, which is true following of Christ here, necessarily led to the confidence that in that future there will be union with Him. That is a deep thought, which might afford material for much to be said, but on which I cannot dwell now.

I remarked at an early stage of this sermon how singular it was that our Lord should present Himself as the Pattern for all human excellence. Is it not even more singular that He should venture to present His own companionship as the sufficient recompense for every sorrow, for every effort, for all pain, for all pilgrimage? To be with Him, He thinks, is enough for any man and enough for all men. Who did He think Himself to be? What did *He* suppose His relation to the rest of us to be, who could thus calmly suggest to the world that the only thing that a heart needed for blessedness was to be beside Him? And we believe it, too little as it influences our lives. 'To be with Christ' is 'very much better'; better than all beneath the stars; better than all on this side eternity.

What does our Lord mean by this all-sufficient hope? We know very little of that dim region beyond, but we know that until He comes again His departed servants are absent from the body. And, in our sense of the word, there can be no *place* for spirits thus free from corporeal environment. And so place, to-day at all events for the departed saints, and in a subordinate degree all through eternity, even when they are clothed with a glorified body, must be but a symbol of state, of condition, of spiritual character. 'Where I am there shall My servant be,' means specially '*What I* am, *that* shall My servant be.' This perfect conformity to that dear Lord, whose footsteps we have followed; assimilation there, which is the issue of imitation here, though broken and imperfect, this is the hope that may gladden and animate every Christian heart.

To be with Him is to be like Him, and therefore to be conscious of His presence in some fashion so intimate, so certain, as that all our earthly notions of presence, derived from the juxtaposition of corporeal frames, are infinite distance as compared with it. That is what my text dimly shadows for us. We know not how that union, which is to be as close as is possible while the distinction of personality is retained, may be accomplished. But this we know, that the coalescence of two drops of mercury, the running together of two drops of water, the blending of heart with heart here in love, are distance in comparison with the complete union of Christ and of the happy soul that rests in Him, as in an atmosphere and an ocean. Oh, brethren! it is not a thing to talk about; it is a thing to take to our hearts, and in silence to be thankful for; 'absent from the body; present with the Lord.'

And is that not enough? The ground of it is enough. 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' That future companionship is guaranteed to the Christian man by the words of Incarnate Truth, and by the resurrection of his Lord. The ground of it is enough, and the contents are enough—enough for faith; enough for hope; enough for peace; enough for work; and eminently enough for comfort.

Ah! there are many other questions that we would fain ask, but to which there is no reply; but as the good old rough music of one of the eighteenth-century worthies has it, we have sufficient.

'My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.'

'It is enough for the disciple that he be as' (that is, with) 'his Master.' So let us take that thought to our hearts and animate ourselves with it, for it is legitimate for us to do so. That one hope is sufficient for us all.

Only let us remember that, according to the teaching of my text, the companionship that blesses the future is the issue of following Him now. I know of no magic in death that is able to change the direction in which a man's face is turned. As he is travelling and has travelled, so he will travel when he comes through the tunnel, and out into the brighter light yonder. The line of a railway marked upon a map may stop at the boundaries of the country with which the map is concerned, but it is clearly going somewhere, and in the same direction. You want the other sheet of the map in order to see whither it is going. That is like your life. The map stops very abruptly, but the line does not stop. Take an unfinished row of tenements. On the last house there stick out bricks preparatory to the continuation of the row. And so our lives are, as it were, studded over with protuberances and preparations for the attachment thereto of a 'house not made with hands,' and yet conformed in its architecture to the row that we have built. The man that follows will attain. For life, the all-sufficient law is, *after Christ*; for hope, the all-sufficient assurance is, *with Christ*.

THE UNIVERSAL MAGNET

'I, if I be lifted up … will draw all men unto Me.'—JOHN xii. 32.

'Never man spake like this Man,' said the wondering Temple officials who were sent to apprehend Jesus. There are many aspects of our Lord's teaching in which it strikes one as unique; but perhaps none is more singular than the boundless boldness of His assertions of His importance to the world. Just think of such sayings as these: 'I am the Light of the world'; 'I am the Bread of Life'; 'I am the Door'; 'A greater than Solomon is here'; 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.' We do not usually attach much importance to men's estimate of themselves; and gigantic claims such as these are generally met by incredulity or scorn. But the strange thing about Christ's loftiest assertions of His world-wide worth and personal sinlessness is that they provoke no contradiction, and that the world takes Him at His own valuation. So profound is the impression that He has made, that men assent when He says, 'I am meek and lowly in heart,' and do not answer as they would to anybody else, 'If you were, you would never have said so.'

Now there is no more startling utterance of this extraordinary self-consciousness of Jesus Christ than the words that I have used for my text. They go deep down into the secret of His power. They open a glimpse into His inmost thoughts about Himself which He very seldom shows us. And they come to each of us with a very touching and strong personal appeal as to what we are doing with, and how we individually are responding to, that universal appeal on which He says that He is exercising.

I. So I wish to dwell on these words now, and ask you first to notice here our Lord's forecasting of the Cross.

A handful of Greeks had come up to Jerusalem to the Passover, and they desired to see Jesus, perhaps only because they had heard about Him, and to gratify some fleeting curiosity; perhaps for some deeper and more sacred reason. But in that tiny incident our Lord sees the first green blade coming up above the ground which was the prophet of an abundant harvest; the first drop of a great abundance of rain. He recognises that He is beginning to pass out from Israel into the world. But the thought of His world-wide influence thus indicated and prophesied immediately brings along with it the thought of what must be gone through before that influence can be established. And he discerns that, like the corn of wheat that falls into the ground, the condition of fruitfulness for Him is death.

Now we are to remember that our Lord here is within a few hours of Gethsemane, and a few days of the Cross, and that events had so unfolded themselves that it needed no prophet to see that there could only be one end to the duel which he had deliberately brought about between Himself and the rulers of Israel. So that I build nothing upon the anticipation of the Cross, which comes out at this stage in our Lord's history, for any man in His position might have seen, as clearly as He did, that His path was blocked, and that very near at hand, by the grim instrument of death. But then remember that this same

expression of my text occurs at a very much earlier period of our Lord's career, and that if we accept this Gospel of John, at the very beginning of it He said, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'; and that that was no mere passing thought is obvious from the fact that midway in His career, if we accept the testimony of the same Gospel, He used the same expression to cavilling opponents when He said: 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He.' And so at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of His career the same idea is cast into the same words, a witness of the hold that it had upon Him, and the continual presence of it to His consciousness.

I do not need to refer here to other illustrations and proofs of the same thing, only I desire to say, as plainly and strongly as I can, that modern ideas that Jesus Christ only recognised the necessity of His death at a late stage of His work, and that like other reformers, He began with buoyant hope, and thought that He had but to speak and the world would hear, and, like other reformers, was disenchanted by degrees, are, in my poor judgment, utterly baseless, and bluntly contradicted by the Gospel narratives. And so, dear brethren, this is the image that rises before us, and that ought to appeal to us all very plainly; a Christ who, from the first moment of His consciousness of Messiahship—and how early that consciousness was I am not here to inquire—was conscious likewise of the death that was to close it. 'He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,' and likewise for *this* end, 'to give His life a ransom for the many.' That gracious, gentle life, full of all charities, and long-suffering, and sweet goodness, and patience, was not the life of a Man whose heart was at leisure from all anxiety about Himself, but the life of a Man before whom there stood, ever grim and distinct away on the horizon, the Cross and *Himself* upon it. You all remember a well-known picture that suggests the 'Shadow of Death,' the shadow of the Cross falling, unseen by Him, but seen with open eyes of horror by His mother. But the reality is a far more pathetic one than that; it is this, that He came on purpose to die.

But now there is another point suggested by these remarkable words, and that is that our Lord regarded the Cross of shame as exaltation or 'lifting up.' I do not believe that the use of this remarkable phrase in our text finds its explanation in the few inches of elevation above the surface of the ground to which the crucified victims were usually raised. That is there, of course, but there is something far deeper and more wonderful than that in the background, and it is this in part, that that Cross, to Christ's eyes, bore a double aspect. So far as the inflicters or the externals of it were concerned, it was ignominy, shame, agony, the very lowest point of humiliation. But there was another side to it. What in one aspect is the *nadir*, the lowest point beneath men's feet, is in another aspect the *zenith*, the very highest point in the bending heaven above us. So throughout this Gospel, and very emphatically in the text, we find that we have the complement of the Pauline view of the Cross, which is, that it was shame and agony. For our Lord says, 'Now the hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified.' Whether it is glory or shame depends on what it was that bound Him there. The reason for His enduring it makes it the very climax and flaming summit of His flaming love. And, therefore, He is lifted up not merely because the Cross is elevated above the ground on the little elevation of Calvary, but that Cross is His throne, because there, in highest and sovereign fashion, are set forth His glories, the glories of His love, and of the 'grace and truth' of which He was 'full.'

So let us not forget this double aspect, and whilst we bow before Him who 'endured the Cross, despising the shame,' let us also try to understand and to feel what He means when, in the vision of it, He said, 'the hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified.' It was meant for mockery, but mockery veiled unsuspected truth when they twined round His pale brows the crown of thorns, thereby setting forth unconsciously the everlasting truth that sovereignty is won by suffering; and placed in His unresisting hand the sceptre of reed, thereby setting forth the deep truth of His kingdom, that dominion is exercised in gentleness. Mightier than all rods of iron, or sharp swords which conquerors wield, and more lustrous and splendid than tiaras of gold glistening with diamonds, are the sceptre of reed in the hands, and the crown of thorns on the head, of the exalted, because crucified, Man of Sorrows.

But there is still another aspect of Christ's vision of His Cross, for the 'lifting up' on it necessarily draws after it the lifting up to the dominion of the heavens. And so the Apostle, using a word kindred with that of my text, but intensifying it by addition, says, 'He became obedient even unto the death of the Cross, wherefore God also hath highly lifted Him up.'

So here we have Christ's own conception of His death, that it was inevitable, that it was exaltation even in the act of dying, and that it drew after it, of inevitable necessity, dominion exercised from the heavens over all the earth. He was lifted up on Calvary, and because He was lifted up He has carried our manhood into the place of glory, and sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high. So much for the first point to which I would desire to turn your attention.

II. Now we have here our Lord disclosing the secret of His attractive power.

'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.' That 'if' expresses no doubt, it only sets forth the condition. The Christ lifted up on the Cross is the Christ that draws men. Now I would have you notice the fact that our Lord thus unveils, as it were, where His power to influence individuals and humanity chiefly resides. He speaks about His death in altogether a different fashion from that of other men, for He does not merely say, 'If I be lifted up from the earth, this story of the Cross will draw men,' but He says, 'I will' do it; and thus contemplates, as I shall have to say in a moment, continuous personal influence all through the ages.

Now that is not how other people have to speak about their deaths, for all other men who have influenced the world for good or for evil, thinkers and benefactors, and reformers, social and religious, all of them come under the one law that their death is no part of their activity, but terminates their work, and that thereafter, with few exceptions, and for brief periods, their influence is a diminishing quantity. So one Apostle had to say, 'To abide in the flesh is more needful for you,' and another had to say, 'I will endeavour that after my decease ye may keep in mind the things that I have told you'; and all thinkers and teachers and helpers glide away further and further, and are wrapped about with thicker and thicker mists of oblivion, and their influence becomes less and less.

The best that history can say about any of them is, 'This man, having served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.' But that other Man who was lifted on the Cross saw no corruption, and the death which puts a period to all other men's work was planted

right in the centre of His, and was itself part of that work, and was followed by a new form of it which is to endure for ever.

The Cross is the magnet of Christianity. Jesus Christ draws men, but it is by His Cross mainly, and that He felt this profoundly is plain enough, not only from such utterances as this of my text, but, to go no further, from the fact that He has asked us to remember only one thing about Him, and has established that ordinance of the Communion or the Lord's Supper, which is to remind us always, and to bear witness to the world, of where is the centre of His work, and the fact which He most desires that men should keep in mind, not the graciousness of His words, not their wisdom, not the good deeds that He did, but 'This is My body broken for you ... this cup is the New Testament in My blood.' A religion which has for its chief rite the symbol of a death, must enshrine that death in the very heart of the forces to which it trusts to renew the world, and to bless individual souls.

If, then, that is true, if Jesus Christ was not all wrong when He spoke as He did in my text, then the question arises, what is it about His death that makes it the magnet that will draw all men? Men are drawn by cords of love. They may be driven by other means, but they are drawn only by love. And what is it that makes Christ's death the highest and noblest and most wonderful and transcendent manifestation of love that the world has ever seen, or ever can see? No doubt you will think me very narrow and old-fashioned when I answer the question, with the profoundest conviction of my own mind, and, I hope, the trust of my own heart. The one thing that entitles men to interpret Christ's death as the supreme manifestation of love is that it was a death voluntarily undertaken for a world's sins.

If you do not believe that, will you tell me what claim on your heart Christ has because He died? Has Socrates any claim on your heart? And are there not hundreds and thousands of martyrs who have just as much right to be regarded with reverence and affection as this Galilean carpenter's Son has, unless, when He died, He died as the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and for yours and mine? I know all the pathetic beauty of the story. I know how many men's hearts are moved in some degree by the life and death of our Lord, who yet would hesitate to adopt the full-toned utterance which I have now been giving. But I would beseech you, dear friends, to lay this question seriously to heart, whether there is any legitimate reason for the reverence, the love, the worship, which the world is giving to this Galilean young man, if you strike out the thought that it was because He loved the world that He chose to die to loose it from the bands of its sin. It may be, it is, a most pathetic and lovely story, but it has not power to draw all men, unless it deals with that which all men need, and unless it is the self-surrender of the Son of God for the whole world.

III. And now, lastly, we have here our Lord anticipating continuous and universal influence.

I have already drawn attention to the peculiar fullness of the form of expression in my text, which, fairly interpreted, does certainly imply that our Lord at that supreme moment looked forward, as I have already said, to His death, not as putting a period to His work, but as being the transition from one form of influence operating upon a very narrow circle, to another form of influence which would one day flood the world. I do not need to dwell upon that thought, beyond seeking to emphasise this truth, that one ought to feel that Jesus

Christ has a living connection now with each of us. It is not merely that the story of the Cross is left to work its results, but, as I for my part believe, that the dear Lord, who, before He became Man, was the Light of the World, and enlightened every man that came into it, after His death is yet more the Light of the World, and is exercising influence all over the earth, not only by conscience and the light that is within us, nor only through the effects of the record of His past, but by the continuous operations of His Spirit. I do not dwell upon that thought further than to say that I beseech you to think of Jesus Christ, not as One who died for our sins only, but as one who lives to-day, and to-day, in no rhetorical exaggeration but in simple and profound truth, is ready to help and to bless and to be with every one of us. 'It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'

But, beyond that, mark His confidence of universal influence: 'I *will* draw all men.' I need not dwell upon the distinct adaptation of Christian truth, and of that sacrifice on the Cross, to the needs of all men. It is the universal remedy, for it goes direct to the universal epidemic. The thing that men and women want most, the thing that *you* want most, is that your relation with God shall be set right, and that you shall be delivered from the guilt of past sin, from the exposure to its power in the present and in the future. Whatever diversities of climate, civilisation, culture, character the world holds, every man is like every other man in this, that he has 'sinned and come short of the glory of God.' And it is because Christ's Cross goes direct to deal with that condition of things that the preaching of it is a gospel, not for this phase of society or that type of men or the other stage of culture, but that it is meant for, and is able to deliver and to bless, every man.

So, brethren, a universal attraction is raying out from Christ's Cross, and from Himself to each of us. But that universal attraction can be resisted. If a man plants his feet firmly and wide apart, and holds on with both hands to some staple or holdfast, then the drawing cannot draw. There is the attraction, but he is not attracted. You demagnetise Christianity, as all history shows, if you strike out the death on the Cross for a world's sin. What is left is not a magnet, but a bit of scrap iron. And you can take yourself away from the influence of the attraction if you will, some of us by active resistance, some of us by mere negligence, as a cord cast over some slippery body with the purpose of drawing it, may slip off, and the thing lie there unmoved.

And so I come to you now, dear friends, with the plain question, What are you doing in response to Christ's drawing of you? He has died for you on the Cross; does that not draw? He lives to bless you; does that not draw? He loves you with love changeless as a God, with love warm and emotional as a man; does that not draw? He speaks to you, I venture to say, through my poor words, and says, 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest'; does that not draw? We are all in the bog. He stands on firm ground, and puts out a hand. If you like to clutch it, by the pledge of the nail-prints on the palm, He will lift you from 'the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock.' God grant that all of us may say, 'Draw us, and we will run after Thee'!

THE SON OF MAN

'... Who is this Son of Man?'—JOHN xii. 34.

I have thought that a useful sermon may be devoted to the consideration of the remarkable name which our Lord gives to Himself—'the Son of Man.' And I have selected this instance of its occurrence, rather than any other, because it brings out a point which is too frequently overlooked, viz. that the name was an entirely strange and enigmatical one to the people who heard it. This question of utter bewilderment distinctly shows us that, and negatives, as it seems to me, the supposition which is often made, that the name 'Son of Man,' upon the lips of Jesus Christ, was equivalent to Messiah. Obviously there is no such significance attached to it by those who put this question. As obviously, for another reason, the two names do not cover the same ground; for our Lord sedulously avoided calling Himself the Christ, and habitually called Himself the Son of Man.

Now one thing to observe about this name is that it is never found upon the lips of any but Jesus Christ. No man ever called him the Son of Man whilst He was upon earth, and only once do we find it applied to Him in the rest of Scripture, and that is on the occasion on which the first martyr, Stephen, dying at the foot of the old wall, saw 'the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.' Two other apparent instances of the use of the expression occur, both of them in the Book of Revelation, both of them quotations from the Old Testament, and in both the more probable reading gives 'a Son of Man,' not '*the* Son of Man.'

One more preliminary remark and I will pass to the title itself. The name has been often supposed to be taken from the remarkable prophecy in the Book of Daniel, of one 'like a son of man,' who receives from the Ancient of Days an everlasting kingdom which triumphs over those kingdoms of brute force which the prophet had seen. No doubt there is a connection between the prophecy and our Lord's use of the name, but it is to be observed that what the prophet speaks of is not 'the Son,' but 'one *like* a son of man'; or in other words, that what the prophecy dwells upon is simply the manhood of the future King in contradistinction to the bestial forms of Lion and Leopard and Bear, whose kingdoms go down before him. Of course Christ fulfils that prediction, and is the 'One like a son of man,' but we cannot say that the title is derived from the prophecy, in which, strictly speaking, it does not occur.

What, then, is the force of this name, as applied to Himself by our Lord?

First, we have in it Christ putting out His hand, if I may say so, to draw us to Himself—identifying Himself with us. Then we have, just as distinctly, Christ, by the use of this name, in a very real sense distinguishing Himself from us, and claiming to hold a unique and solitary relation to mankind. And then we have Christ, by the use of this name in its connection with the ancient prophecy, pointing us onward to a wonderful future.

I. First then, Christ thereby identifies Himself with us.

The name Son of Man, whatever more it means, declares the historical fact of His Incarnation, and the reality and genuineness, the completeness and fullness, of His assumption of humanity. And so it is significant to notice that the name is employed continually in the places in the Gospels where especial emphasis is to be placed, for some reason or other, upon our Lord's manhood, as, for instance, when He would bring into view the depth of His humiliation. It is this name that He uses when He says: 'Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.' The use of the term there is very significant and profound; He contrasts His homelessness, not with the homes of men that dwell in palaces, but with the homes of the inferior creatures. As if He would say, 'Not merely am I individually homeless and shelterless, but I am so because I am truly a man, the only creature that builds houses, and the only creature that has not a home. Foxes have holes, anywhere they can rest, the birds of the air have,' not as our Bible gives it, 'nests,' but 'roosting-places, any bough will do for them. All living creatures are at home in this material universe; I, as a Representative of humanity, wander a pilgrim and a sojourner.' We are all restless and homeless; the creatures correspond to their environment. We have desires and longings, wild yearnings, and deep-seated needs, that 'wander through eternity'; the Son of Man, the representative of manhood, 'hath not where to lay His head.'

Then the same expression is employed on occasions when our Lord desires to emphasise the completeness of His participation in all our conditions. As, for instance, 'the Son of Man came eating and drinking,' knowing the ordinary limitations and necessities of corporeal humanity; having the ordinary dependence upon external things; nor unwilling to taste, with pure and thankful lip, whatever gladness may be found in man's path through the supply of natural appetites.

And the name is employed habitually on occasions when He desires to emphasise His manhood as having truly taken upon itself the whole weight and weariness of man's sin, and the whole burden of man's guilt, and the whole tragicalness of the penalties thereof, as in the familiar passages, so numerous that I need only refer to them and need not attempt to quote them, in which we read of the Son of Man being 'betrayed into the hands of sinners'; or in those words, for instance, which so marvellously blend the lowliness of the Man and the lofty consciousness of the mysterious relation which He bears to the whole world; 'The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for the many.'

Now if we gather all these instances together (and they are only specimens culled almost at random), and meditate for a moment on the Name as illuminated by such words as these, they suggest to us, first, how truly and how blessedly He is 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.' All our human joys were His. He knew all human sorrow. The ordinary wants of human nature belonged to Him; He hungered, He thirsted, and was weary; He ate and drank and slept. The ordinary wants of the human heart He knew; He was hurt by hatred, stung by ingratitude, yearned for love; His spirit expanded amongst friends, and was pained when they fell away. He fought and toiled, and sorrowed and enjoyed. He had to pray, to trust, and to weep. He was a Son of Man, a true man among men. His life was brief; we have but fragmentary records of it for three short years. In outward form it covers but a narrow area of human experience, and large tracts of human life seem to be unrepresented

in it. Yet all ages and classes of men, in all circumstances, however unlike those of the peasant Rabbi who died when he was just entering mature manhood, may feel that this man comes closer to them than all beside. Whether for stimulus for duty, or for grace and patience in sorrow, or for restraint in enjoyment, or for the hallowing of all circumstances and all tasks, the presence and example of the Son of Man are sufficient. Wherever we go, we may track His footsteps by the drops of His blood upon the sharp flints that we have to tread. In all narrow passes, where the briars tear the wool of the flock, we may see, left there on the thorns, what they rent from the pure fleece of the Lamb of God that went before. The Son of Man is our Brother and our Example.

And is it not beautiful, and does it not speak to us touchingly and sweetly of our Lord's earnest desire to get very near us and to bring us very near to Him, that this name, which emphasises humiliation and weakness and the likeness to ourselves, should be the name that is always upon His lips? Just as, if I may compare great things with small, some teacher or philanthropist, that went away from civilised into savage life, might leave behind him the name by which he was known in Europe, and adopt some barbarous designation that was significant in the language of the savage tribe to whom he was sent, and say to them: 'That is my name now, call me by that,' so this great Leader of our souls, who has landed upon our coasts with His hands full of blessings, His heart full of love, has taken a name that makes Him one of ourselves, and is never wearied of speaking to our hearts, and telling us that it is that by which He chooses to be known. It is a touch of the same infinite condescension which prompted His coming, that makes Him choose as His favourite and habitual designation the name of weakness and identification, the name 'Son of Man.'

II. But now turn to what is equally distinct and clear in this title. Here we have our Lord distinguishing Himself from us, and plainly claiming a unique relationship to the whole world.

Just fancy how absurd it would be for one of us to be perpetually insisting on the fact that he was a man, to be taking that as his continual description of himself, and pressing it upon people's attention as if there was something strange about it. The idea is preposterous; and the very frequency and emphasis with which the name comes from our Lord's lips, lead one to suspect that there is something lying behind it more than appears on the surface. That impression is confirmed and made a conviction, if you mark the article which is prefixed, *the* Son of Man. A Son of man is a very different idea. When He says '*the* Son of Man' He seems to declare that in Himself there are gathered up all the qualities that constitute humanity; that He is, to use modern language, the realised Ideal of manhood, the typical Man, in whom is everything that belongs to manhood, and who stands forth as complete and perfect. Appropriately, then, the name is continually used with suggestions of authority and dignity contrasting with those of humiliation. 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,' 'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins' and the like. So that you cannot get away from this, that this Man whom the whole world has conspired to profess to admire for His gentleness, and His meekness, and His lowliness, and His religious sanity, stood forward and said: 'I am complete and perfect, and everything that belongs to manhood you will find in Me.'

And it is very significant in this connection that the designation occurs more frequently in the first three Gospels than in the fourth; which is alleged to present higher notions of

the nature and personality of Jesus Christ than are found in the other three. There are more instances in Matthew's Gospel in which our Lord calls Himself the Son of Man, with all the implication of uniqueness and completeness which that name carries; there are more even in the Gospel of the Servant, the Gospel according to Mark, than in the Gospel of the Word of God, the Gospel according to John. And so I think we are entitled to say that by this name, which the testimony of all our four Gospels makes it certain, even to the most suspicious reader, that Christ applied to Himself, He declared His humanity, His absolutely perfect and complete humanity.

In substance He is claiming the same thing for Himself that Paul claimed for Him when he called Him 'the second Adam.' There have been two men in the world, says Paul, the fallen Adam, with his infantile and undeveloped perfections, and the Christ, with His full and complete humanity. All other men are fragments, He is the 'entire and perfect chrysolite.' As one of our epigrammatic seventeenth-century divines has it, 'Aristotle is but the rubbish of an Adam,' and Adam is but the dim outline sketch of a Jesus. Between these two there has been none. The one Man as God meant him, the type of man, the perfect humanity, the realised ideal, the home of all the powers of manhood, is He who Himself claimed that place for Himself, and stepped into it with the strange words upon His lips, 'I am meek and lowly of heart.'

'Who is this Son of Man?' Ah, brethren! 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.' A perfect Son of Man, born of a woman, 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' must be more than a Son of Man. And that moral completeness and that ideal perfection in all the faculties and parts of His nature which drove the betrayer to clash down the thirty pieces of silver in the sanctuary in despair that 'he had betrayed innocent blood'; which made Pilate wash his hands 'of the blood of this just person'; which stopped the mouths of the adversaries when He challenged them to convince Him of sin, and which all the world ever since has recognised and honoured, ought surely to lead us to ask the question, 'Who is this Son of Man?' and to answer it, as I pray we all may answer it, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

This fact of His absolute completeness invests His work with an altogether unique relationship to the rest of mankind. And so we find the name employed upon His own lips in connections in which He desires to set Himself forth as the single and solitary medium of all blessing and salvation to the world—as, for instance, 'The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for the many'; 'Ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' He is what the ladder was in the vision to the patriarch, with his head upon the stone and the Syrian sky over him—the Medium of all communication between earth and heaven. And that ladder which joins heaven to earth, and brings all angels down on the solitary watchers, comes straight down, as the sunbeams do, to every man wherever he is. Each of us sees the shortest line from his own standing-place to the central light, and its beams come straight to the apple of each man's eye. So because Christ is more than a man, because He is *the* Man, His blessings come to each of us direct and straight, as if they had been launched from the throne with a purpose and a message to us alone. Thus He who is in Himself perfect manhood touches all men, and all men touch Him, and the Son of Man, whom God hath sealed, will give to every one of us the bread from heaven. The unique relationship which brings Him into connection with every

soul of man upon earth, and makes Him the Saviour, Helper, and Friend of us all, is expressed when He calls Himself the Son of Man.

III. And now one last word in regard to the predictive character of this designation.

Even if we cannot regard it as being actually a quotation of the prophecy in the Book of Daniel, there is an evident allusion to that prophecy, and to the whole circle of ideas presented by it, of an everlasting dominion, which shall destroy all antagonistic power, and of a solemn coming for judgment of One like a Son of Man.

We find, then, the name occurring on our Lord's lips very frequently in that class of passages with which we are so familiar, and which are so numerous that I need not quote them to you; in which He speaks of the second coming of the Son of Man; as, for instance, that one which connects itself most distinctly with the Book of Daniel, the words of high solemn import before the tribunal of the High Priest. 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the glories of heaven'; or as when He says, 'He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man'; or as when the proto-martyr, with his last words, declared in sudden burst of surprise and thrill of gladness, 'I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'

Two thoughts are all that I can touch on here. The name carries with it a blessed message of the present activity and perpetual manhood of the risen Lord. Stephen does not see Him as all the rest of Scripture paints Him, *sitting* at the right hand of God, but *standing* there. The emblem of His sitting at the right hand of God represents triumphant calmness in the undisturbed confidence of victory. It declares the completeness of the work that He has done upon earth, and that all the history of the future is but the unfolding of the consequences of that work which by His own testimony waa finished when He bowed His head and died. But the dying martyr sees him *standing*, as if He had sprung to His feet in response to the cry of faith from the first of the long train of sufferers. It is as if the Emperor upon His seat, looking down upon the arena where the gladiators are contending to the death, could not sit quiet amongst the flashing axes of the lictors and the purple curtains of His throne, and see their death-struggles, but must spring to His feet to help them, or at least bend down with the look and with the reality of sympathy. So Christ, the Son of Man, bearing His manhood with Him,

'Still bends on earth a Brother's eye,'

and is the ever-present Helper of all struggling souls that put their trust in Him.

Then as to the other and main thought here in view—the second coming of that perfect Manhood to be our Judge. It is too solemn a subject for human lips to say much about. It has been vulgarised, and the power taken out of it by many well-meant attempts to impress it upon men's hearts. But that coming is *certain*. That manhood could not end its relationship to us with the Cross, nor yet with the slow, solemn, upward progress which bore Him, pouring down blessings, up into the same bright cloud that had dwelt between the cherubim and had received Him into its mysterious recesses at the Transfiguration. That He should come again is the only possible completion of His work.

That Judge is our Brother. So in the deepest sense we are tried by our Peer. Man's knowledge at its highest cannot tell the moral desert of anything that any man does. You

may judge action, you may sentence for breaches of law, you may declare a man clear of any blame for such, but for any one to read the secrets of another heart is beyond human power; and if He that is the Judge were only a man there would be wild work, and many a blunder in the sentences that were given. But when we think that it is the Son of Man that is our Judge, then we know that the Omniscience of divinity, that ponders the hearts and reads the motives, will be all blended with the tenderness and sympathy of humanity; that we shall be judged by One who knows all our frame, not only with the knowledge of a Maker, if I may so say, as from outside, but with the knowledge of a possessor, as from within; that we shall be judged by One who has fought and conquered in all temptations; and most blessed of all, that we shall be judged by One with whom we have only to plead His own work and His own love and His Cross that we may stand acquitted before His throne.

So, brethren, in that one mighty Name all the past, present, and future are gathered and blended together. In the past His Cross fills the retrospect: for the future there rises up, white and solemn, His judgment throne. 'The Son of Man *is* come to give His life a ransom for the many'; that is the centre point of all history. The Son of Man *shall* come to judge the world; that is the one thought that fills the future. Let us lay hold by true faith on the mighty work which He has done on the Cross, then we shall rejoice to see our Brother on the throne, when the 'judgment is set and the books are opened.' Oh, friends, cleave to Him ever in trust and love, in communion and imitation, in obedience and confession, that ye may be accounted worthy 'to stand before the Son of Man' in that day!

A PARTING WARNING

'Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.'—JOHN xii. 35,36 (R.V.).

These are the last words of our Lord's public ministry. He afterwards spoke only to His followers in the sweet seclusion of the sympathetic home at Bethany, and amid the sanctities of the upper chamber. 'Yet a little while am I with you';—the sun had all but set. Two days more, and the Cross was reared on Calvary, but there was yet time to turn to the light. And so His divine charity 'hoped all things,' and continued to plead with those who had so long rejected Him. As befits a last appeal, the words unveil the heart of Christ. They are solemn with warning, radiant with promise, almost beseeching in their earnestness. He loves too well not to warn, but He will not leave the bitterness of threatening as a last savour on the palate, and so the lips, into which grace is poured, bade farewell to His enemies with the promise and the hope that even they may become 'the sons of light.'

The solemnity of the occasion, then, gives great force to the words; and the remembrance of it sets us on the right track for estimating their significance. Let us see what lessons for us there may be in Christ's last words to the world.

I. There is, first, a self-revelation.

It is no mere grammatical pedantry that draws attention to the fact that four times in this text does our Lord employ the definite article, and speak of 'the light.' And that that is no mere accident is obvious from the fact that, in the last clause of our text, where the general idea of light is all that is meant to be emphatic, the article is omitted. 'Yet a little while is *the* light with you; walk while ye have *the* light…. While ye have *the* light, believe in *the* light, that ye may be the children of light.'

So then, most distinctly here, in His final appeal to the world, He draws back the curtain, as it were, takes away the shade that had covered the lamp, and lets one full beam stream out for the last impression that He leaves. Is it not profoundly significant and impressive that then, of all times, over and over again, in the compass of these short verses, this Galilean peasant makes the tremendous assertion that He is what none other can be, in a solitary and transcendent sense, *the* Light of Mankind? Undismayed by universal rejection, unfaltering in spite of the curling lips of incredulity and scorn, unbroken by the near approach of certain martyrdom, He presents Himself before the world as its Light. Nothing in the history of mad, fanatical claims to inspiration and divine authority is to be compared with these assertions of our Lord. He is the fontal Source, He says, of all illumination; He stands before the whole race, and claims to be 'the Master-Light of all our seeing.' Whatsoever ideas of clearness of knowledge, of rapture of joy, of whiteness of purity, are symbolised by that great emblem, He declares that He manifests them all to men. Others may shine; but they are, as He said, 'lights kindled,' and therefore 'burning.' Others may

shine, but they have caught their radiance from Him. All teachers, all helpers, all thinkers draw their inspiration, if they have any, from Him, in whom was life, and the Life was the Light of men.

There has been blazing in the heavens of late a new star, that burst upon astonished astronomers in a void spot; but its brilliancy, though far transcending that of our sun, soon began to wane, and before long, apparently, there will be blackness again where there was blackness before. So all lights but His are temporary as well as derived, and men 'willing for a season to rejoice' in the fleeting splendours, and to listen to the teacher of a day, lose the illumination of his presence and guidance of his thoughts as the ages roll on. But *the* Light is 'not for an age, but for all time.'

Now, brethren, this is Christ's estimate of Himself. I dwell not on it for the purpose of seeking to exhaust its depth of significance. In it there lies the assertion that He, and He only, is the source of all valid knowledge of the deepest sort concerning God and men, and their mutual relations. In it lie the assertion that He, and He only, is the source of all true gladness that may blend with our else darkened lives, and the further assertion that from Him, and from Him alone, can flow to us the purity that shall make us pure. We have to turn to that Man close by His Cross, on whom while He spoke the penumbra of the eclipse of death was beginning to show itself, and to say to Him what the Psalmist said of old to the Jehovah whom he knew, and whom we recognise as indwelling in Jesus: 'With Thee is the fountain of life. Thou makest us to drink of the river of Thy pleasures. In Thy light shall we see light.'

So Christ thought of Himself; so Christ would have as to think of Him. And it becomes a question for us how, if we refuse to accept that claim of a solitary, underived, eternal, and universal power of illuminating mankind, we can save His character for the veneration of the world. We cannot go picking and choosing amongst the Master's words, and say 'This is historical, and that mythical.' We cannot select some of them, and leave others on one side. You must take the whole Christ if you take any Christ. And the whole Christ is He who, within sight of Calvary, and in the face of all but universal rejection, lifted up His voice, and, as His valediction to the world, declared, 'I am the Light of the world.' So He says to us. Oh that we all might cast ourselves before Him, with the cry, 'Lighten our darkness, O Lord, we beseech Thee!'

II. Secondly, we have here a double exhortation.

'Walk in the light; believe in the light.' These two sum up all our duties; or rather, unveil for us the whole fullness of the possible privileges and blessings of which our relation to that light is capable. It is obvious that the latter of them is the deeper in idea, and the prior in order of sequence. There must be the 'belief' in the light before there is the 'walk' in the light. Walking includes the ideas of external activity and of progress. And so, putting these two exhortations together, we get the whole of Christianity considered as subjective. 'Believe in the light; trust in the light,' and then 'walk' in it. A word, then, about each of these branches of this double exhortation.

'Trust in the light.' The figure seems to be dropped at first sight; for it wants little faith to believe in the sunshine at midday; and when the light is pouring out, how can a man but see it? But the apparent incongruity of the metaphor points to something very deep in regard

to the spiritual side. We cannot but believe in the light that meets the eye when it meets it, but it is possible for a man to blind himself to the shining of this light. Therefore the exhortation is needed—'Believe in the light,' for only by believing it can you see it. Just as the eye is the organ of sight, just as its nerves are sensitive to the mysterious finger of the beam, just as on its mirroring surface impinges the gentle but mighty force that has winged its way across all the space between us and the sun, and yet falls without hurting, so faith, the 'inward eye which makes the bliss' of the solitary soul, is the one organ by which you and I can see the light. 'Seeing is believing,' says the old proverb. That is true in regard to the physical. Believing is seeing, is much rather the way to put it in regard to the spiritual and divine.

Only as we trust the light do we see the light. Unless you and I put our confidence in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, we have no adequate knowledge of Him and no clear vision of Him. We must know that we may love; but we must love that we may know. We must believe that we may see. True, we must see that we may believe, but the preliminary vision which precedes belief is slight and dim as compared with the solidity and the depth of assurance with which we apprehend the reality and know the lustre of Him whom our faith has grasped. You will never know the glory of the light, nor the sweetness with which it falls upon the gazing eye, until you turn your face to that Master, and so receive on your susceptible and waiting heart the warmth and the radiance which He only can bestow. 'Believe in the light.' Trust it; or rather, trust Him who is it. He cannot deceive. This light from heaven can never lead astray. Absolutely we may rely upon it; unconditionally we must follow it. Lean upon Him—to take another metaphor—with all your weight. His arm is strong to bear the burden of our weaknesses, sorrows, and, above all, our sins. 'While ye have light, trust the light.'

But then that is not enough. Man, with his double relations, must have an active and external as well as an inward and contemplative life. And so our Lord, side by side with the exhortation on which I have been touching, puts the other one, 'Walk in the light.' Our inward emotions, however deep and precious, however real the affiance, however whole-hearted the love, are maimed and stunted, and not what the light requires, unless there follows upon them the activity of the walk. What do we get the daylight for? To sit and gaze at it? By no means; but that it may guide us upon our path and help us in all our work. And so all Christian people need ever to remember that Jesus Christ has indissolubly bound together these two phases of our relation to Him as the light of life-inward and blessed contemplation by faith and outward practical activity. To walk is, of course, the familiar metaphor for the external life of man, and all our deeds are to be in conformity with the Light, and in communion with Him. This is the deepest designation, perhaps, of the true character of a Christian life in its external aspect—that it walks in Christ, doing nothing but as His light shines, and ever bearing along with it conscious fellowship with Him who is thus the guiding and irradiating and gladdening and sanctifying life of our lives, '*Walk* in the light as He *is* in the light.' Our days fleet and change; His are stable and the same. For, although these words which I have quoted, in their original application refer to God the Father, they are no less true about Him who rests at the right hand of God, and is one light with Him. He *is* in the light. We may approximate to that stable and calm radiance, even though our lives are passed through changing scenes, and effort and struggle are their

characteristics. And oh! how blessed, brother, such a life will be, all gladdened by the unsetting and unclouded sunshine that even in the shadiest places shines, and turns the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death into solemn light; teaching gloom to glow with a hidden sun!

But there is not only the idea of activity here, there is the further notion of progress. Unless Christian people to their faith add work, and have both their faith and their consequent work in a continual condition of progress and growth, there is little reason to believe that they apprehend the light at all. If you trust the light you will walk in it; and if your days are not in conformity nor in communion with Him, and are not advancing nearer and nearer to the central blaze, then it becomes you to ask yourselves whether you have verily seen at all, or trusted at all, 'the Light of life.'

III. Thirdly, there is here a warning.

'Walk whilst ye have the light, lest the darkness come upon you.' That is the summing up of the whole history of that stiff-necked and marvellous people. For what has all the history of Israel been since that day but groping in the wilderness without any pillar of fire? But there is more than that in it. Christ gives us this one solemn warning of what falls on us if we turn away from Him. Rejected light is the parent of the densest darkness, and the man who, having the light, does not trust it, piles around himself thick clouds of obscurity and gloom, far more doleful and impenetrable than the twilight that glimmers round the men who have never known the daylight of revelation. The history of un-Christian and anti-Christian Christendom is a terrible commentary upon these words of the Master, and the cries that we hear all round us to-day from men who will not follow the light of Christ, and moan or boast that they dwell in agnostic darkness, tell us that, of all the eclipses that can fall upon heart and mind, there is none so dismal or thunderously dark as that of the men who, having seen the light of Christ in the sky, have turned from it and said, 'It is no light, it is only a mock sun.' Brethren, tempt not that fate.

And if Christian men and women do not advance in their knowledge and their conformity, like clouds of darkness will fall upon them. None is so hopeless as the unprogressive Christian, none so far away as those who have been brought nigh and have never come any nigher. If you believe the light, see that you growingly trust and walk in it, else darkness will come upon you, and you will not know whither you go.

IV. And lastly, there is here a hope and a promise.

'That ye may be the sons of light.'

Faith and obedience turn a man into the likeness of that in which he trusts. If we trust Jesus we open our hearts to Him; and if we open our hearts to Him He will come in. If you are in a darkened room, what have you to do in order to have it filled with glad sunshine? Open the shutters and pull up the blinds, and the light will do all the rest. If you trust the light, it will rush in and fill every crevice and cranny of your hearts. Faith and obedience will mould us, by their natural effect, into the resemblance of that on which we lean. As one of the old German mystics said, 'What thou lovest, that thou dost become.' And it is blessedly true. The same principle makes Christians like Christ, and makes idolaters like their gods. 'They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them,' says one of the Psalms. 'They followed after vanity and are become vain,' says the

chronicler of Israel's defections. 'We with unveiled faces beholding'—or mirroring—'the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.' Trust the light and you become 'sons of the light.'

And so, dear friends, all of us may hope that by degrees, as the reward of faith and of walking, we still may bear the image of the heavenly, even here on earth. While as yet we only believe in the light, we may participate in its transforming power, like some far-off planet on the utmost bounds of some solar system, that receives faint and small supplies of light and warmth, through a thick atmosphere of vapour, and across immeasurable spaces. But we have the assurance that we shall be carried nearer our centre, and then, like the planets that are closer to the sun than our earth is, we shall feel the fuller power of the heat, and be saturated with the glory of the light. 'We shall see Him as He is'; and then we too 'shall blaze forth like the sun in the kingdom of our Father.'

THE LOVE OF THE DEPARTING CHRIST

'... When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'—JOHN xiii. 1.

The latter half of St. John's Gospel, which begins with these words, is the Holy of Holies of the New Testament. Nowhere else do the blended lights of our Lord's superhuman dignity and human tenderness shine with such lambent brightness. Nowhere else is His speech at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. On no other page, even of the Bible, have so many eyes, glistening with tears, looked and had the tears dried. The immortal words which Christ spoke in that upper chamber are His highest self-revelation in speech, even as the Cross to which they led up is His most perfect self-revelation in act.

To this most sacred part of the New Testament my text is the introduction. It unveils to us gleams of Christ's heart, and does what the Evangelists very seldom venture to do, viz. gives us some sort of analysis of the influences which then determined the flow and the shape of our Lord's love.

Many good commentators prefer to read the last words of my text, 'He loved them unto the *uttermost*' rather than 'unto the *end*'—so taking them to express the depth and degree rather than the permanence and perpetuity of our Lord's love. And that seems to me to be by far the worthier and the nobler meaning, as well as the one which is borne out by the usual signification of the expression in other Greek authors. It is much to know that the emotions of these last moments did not interrupt Christ's love. It is even more to know that in some sense they perfected it, giving even a greater vitality to its tenderness, and a more precious sweetness to its manifestations. So understood, the words explain for us why it was that in the sanctity of the upper chamber there ensued the marvellous act of the foot-washing, the marvellous discourses which follow, and the climax of all, that High-priestly prayer. They give utterance to a love which Christ's consciousness at that solemn hour tended to shapen and to deepen.

So, under the Evangelist's guidance, we may venture to gaze at least a little way into these depths, and with all reverence to try and see something at all events of the fringe and surface of the love 'which passeth knowledge.' 'Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them then unto the uttermost.'

My object will be best accomplished by simply following the guidance of the words before us, and asking you to look first at that love as a love which was not interrupted, but perfected by the prospect of separation.

I. It would take us much too far away, however interesting the contemplation might be, to dwell with any particularity upon our Lord's consciousness as it is here set forth in that 'He knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father.'

But I can scarcely avoid noticing, though only in a few sentences, the salient points of that Christ-consciousness as it is set forth here.

'He knew that His hour was come.' All His life was passed under the consciousness of a divine necessity laid upon Him, to which He lovingly and cheerfully yielded Himself. On His lips there are no words more significant, and few more frequent, than that divine 'I must!' 'It behoves the Son of Man' to do this, that, and the other—yielding to the necessity imposed by the Father's will, and sealed by His own loving resolve to be the Saviour of the world. And in like manner, all through His life He declares Himself conscious of the hours which mark the several crises and stages of His mission. They come to Him and He discerns them. No external power can coerce Him to any act till the hour come. No external power can hinder Him from the act when it comes. When the hour strikes He hears the phantom sound of the bell; and, hearing, He obeys. And thus, at the last and supreme moment, to Him it dawned unquestionable and irrevocable. How did He meet it? Whilst on the one hand there was the shrinking of which we have such pathetic testimony in the broken prayer that He Himself amended—'Father! save Me from this hour…. Yet for this cause came I unto this hour,'—there is a strange, triumphant joy, blending with the shrinking, that the decisive hour is at last come.

Mark, too, the form which the consciousness took—not that now the hour had come for suffering or death or bearing the sins of the world—all which aspects of it were nevertheless present to Him, as we know; but that now He was soon to leave all the world beneath Him and to return to the Father.

The terror, the agony, the shame, the mysterious burden of a world's sins were now to be laid upon Him—all these elements are submerged, as it were, and become less conspicuous than the one thought of leaving behind all the limitations, and the humiliations, and the compelled association with evil which, like a burning brand laid upon a tender skin, was an hourly and momentary agony to Him, and soaring above them all, unto His own calm home, His habitation from eternity with the Father, as He had been before the world was. How strange this blending of shrinking and of eagerness, of sorrow and of joy, of human trembling consciousness of impending death, and of triumphant consciousness of the approach of the hour when the Son of Man, even in His bitterest agony and deepest humiliation, should, paradoxically, be glorified, and should 'leave the world to go unto the Father'!

We cannot enter with any particularity or depth into this marvellous and unique consciousness, but it is set forth here—and that is the point to which especially I desire to turn your attention—as the basis and the reason for a special tenderness softening His voice, and taking possession of His heart, as He thought of the impending separation.

And is that not beautiful? And does it not help us to realise how truly 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' and bearing a heart thrilling with all innocent human emotions that divine Saviour was? We, too, have known what it is to feel, because of approaching separation from dear ones, the need for a tenderer tenderness. At such moments the masks of use and wont drop away, and we are eager to find some word, to put our whole souls into some look, our whole strength into one clinging embrace that may express all our love, and may be a joy to two hearts for ever after to remember. The Master knew that longing,

and felt the pain of separation; and He, too, yielded to the human impulse which makes the thought of parting the key to unlock the hidden chambers of the most jealously guarded heart, and let the shyest of its emotions come out for once into the daylight. So, 'knowing that His hour was come, He loved them unto the uttermost.'

But there is not only in this a wonderful expression of the true humanity of the Christ, but along with that a suggestion of something more sacred and deeper still. For surely amidst all the parting scenes that the world's literature has enshrined, amidst all the examples of self-oblivion at the last moment, when a martyr has been the comforter of his weeping friends, there are none that without degradation to this can be set by the side of this supreme and unique instance of self-oblivion. Did not Christ, for the sake of that handful of poor people, first and directly, and for the rest of us afterwards, of course, secondarily and indirectly, so suppress all the natural emotions of these last moments as that their absolute absence is unique and singular, and points onwards to something more, viz. that this Man who was susceptible of all human affections, and loved us with a love which is not merely high above our grasp, absolute, perfect, changeless and divine, but with a love like our own human affection, had also more than a man's heart to give us, and gave us more, when, that He might comfort and sustain, He crushed down Himself and went to the Cross with words of tenderness and consolation and encouragement for others upon His lips? Knowing all that was lying before Him, He was neither absorbed nor confounded, but carried a heart at leisure to love even then 'unto the uttermost.'

And if the prospect only sharpened and perfected, nor interrupted for one instant the flow of His love, the reality has no power to do aught else. In the glory, when He reached it, He poured out the same loving heart; and to-day He looks down upon us with the same Face that bent over the table in the upper room, and the same tenderness flows to us. When John saw his Master next, after His Ascension, amidst the glories of the vision in his rocky Patmos, though His face was as the sun shineth in his strength, it was the old face. Though His hand bore the stars in a cluster, it was the hand that had been pierced with the nails. Though the breast was girded with the golden girdle of sovereignty and of priesthood, it was the breast on which John's happy head had lain; and though the 'Voice was as the sound of many waters,' it soothed itself to a murmur, gentle as that with which the tideless sea about him rippled upon the silvery sand when He said, 'Fear not ... I am the First and the Last.' Knowing that He goes to the Father, He loves to the uttermost, and being with the Father, He still so loves.

II. And now I must, with somewhat less of detail, dwell upon the other points which this text brings out for us. It suggests to us next that we have in the love of Jesus Christ a love which is faithful to the obligations of its own past.

Having loved, He loves. Because He had been a certain thing, therefore He is and He shall be that same. That is an argument that implies divinity. About nothing human can we say that because it has been therefore it shall be. Alas! about much that is human we have to say the converse, that because it has been, therefore it will cease to be. And though, blessed be God! they are few and they are poor who have had no experience in their lives of human hearts whose love in the past has been such that it manifestly is for ever, yet we cannot with the same absolute confidence say about one another, even about the dearest, 'Having

loved, he loves.' But we can say so about Christ. There is no exhaustion in that great stream that pours out from His heart; no diminution in its flow.

They tell us that the central light of our system, that great sun itself, pouring out its rays exhausts its warmth, and were it not continually replenished, must gradually, and even though continually replenished, will ultimately cease to blaze, and be a dead, cold mass of ashes. But this central Light, this heart of Christ, which is the Sun of the World, will endure like the sun, and after the sun is cold, His love will last for ever. He pours it out and has none the less to give. There is no bankruptcy in His expenditure, no exhaustion in His effort, no diminution in His stores. 'Thy mercy endureth for ever'; 'Thou hast loved, therefore Thou wilt love' is an inference for time and for eternity, on which we may build and rest secure.

III. Then, still further, we have here this love suggested as being a love which has special tenderness towards its own. 'Having loved His own, He loved them to the uttermost.'

These poor men who, with all their errors, did cleave to Him; who, in some dim way, understood somewhat of His greatness and His sweetness—and do you and I do more?—who, with all their sins, yet were true to Him in the main; who had surrendered very much to follow Him, and had identified themselves with Him, were they to have no special place in His heart because in that heart the whole world lay? Is there any reason why we should be afraid of saying that the universal love of Jesus Christ, which gathers into His bosom all mankind, does fall with special tenderness and sweetness upon those who have made Him theirs and have surrendered themselves to be His? Surely it must be that He has special nearness to those who love Him; surely it is reasonable that He should have special delight in those who try to resemble Him; surely it is only what one might expect of Him that He should in a special manner honour the drafts, so to speak, of those who have confidence in Him, and are building their whole lives upon Him. Surely, because the sun shines down upon dunghills and all impurities, that is no reason why it should not lie with special brightness on the polished mirror that reflects its lustre. Surely, because Jesus Christ loves—Blessed be His name!—the publicans and the harlots and the outcasts and the sinners, that is no reason why He should not bend with special tenderness over those who, loving Him, try to serve Him, and have set their whole hopes upon Him. The rainbow strides across the sky, but there is a rainbow in every little dewdrop that hangs glistening on the blades of grass. There is nothing limited, nothing sectional, nothing narrow in the proclamation of a special tenderness of Christ towards His own, when you accompany with that truth this other, that all men are besought by Him to come into that circle of 'His own,' and that only they themselves shut any out therefrom. Blessed be His name! the whole world dwells in His love, but there is an inner chamber in which He discovers all His heart to those who find in that heart their Heaven and their all. 'He came to His own,' in the wider sense of the word, and 'His own received Him not'; but also, 'having loved His own He loved them unto the end.' There are textures and lives which can only absorb some of the rays of light in the spectrum; some that are only capable of taking, so to speak, the violet rays of judgment and of wrath, and some who open their hearts for the ruddy brightness at the other end of the line. Do you see to it, brethren, that you are of that inner circle who receive the whole Christ into their hearts, and to whom He can unfold the fullness of His love.

IV. And, lastly, my text suggests that love of Christ as being made specially tender by the necessities and the dangers of His friends. 'He loved His own which were in the world,' and so loving them, 'loved them to the uttermost.'

We have, running through these precious discourses which follow my text, many allusions to the separation which was to ensue, and to His leaving His followers in circumstances of peculiar peril, defenceless and solitary. 'I come unto Thee, and am no more in the world,' says He in the final High-priestly prayer, 'but these are in the world. Holy Father, keep them through Thine own name.' The same contrast between the certain security of the Shepherd and the troubled perils of the scattered flock seems to be in the words of my text, and suggests a sweet and blessed reason for the special tenderness with which He looked upon them. As a dying father on his deathbed may yearn over orphans that he is leaving defenceless, so Christ is here represented as conscious of an accession even to the tender longings of His heart, when He thought of the loneliness and the dangers to which His followers were to be exposed.

Ah! It seems a harsh contrast between the Emperor, sitting throned there between the purple curtains, and the poor athletes wrestling in the arena below. It seems strange to think that a loving Master has gone up into the mountain, and has left His disciples to toil in rowing on the stormy sea of life; but the contrast is only apparent. For you and I, if we love and trust Him, are with Him 'in the heavenly places' even whilst we toil here, and He is with us, working with us, even whilst He 'sitteth at the right hand of God.'

We may be sure of this, brethren, that that love ever increases its manifestations according to our deepening necessities. The darker the night the more lustrous the stars. The deeper, the narrower, the savager, the Alpine gorge, usually the fuller and the swifter the stream that runs through it. And the more that enemies and fears gather round about us, the sweeter will be the accents of our Comforter's voice, and the fuller will be the gifts of tenderness and grace with which He draws near to us. Our sorrows, dangers, necessities, are doors through which His love can come nigh.

So, dear friends, we have had experience of sweet and transient human love; we have had experience of changeful and ineffectual love; turn away from them all to this immortal, deep heart of Christ's, welling over with a love which no change can affect, which no separation can diminish, which no sin can provoke, which becomes greater and tenderer as our necessities increase, and ask Him to fill your hearts with that, that you may 'know the length and breadth and depth and height of that love which passeth knowledge,' and so 'be filled with all the fullness of God.'

THE SERVANT-MASTER

'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.'—JOHN xiii. 3-5.

It has been suggested that the dispute as to 'which was the greatest,' which broke the sanctities of the upper chamber, was connected with the unwillingness of each of the Apostles to perform the menial office of washing the feet of his companions. They had come in from Bethany, and needed the service. But apparently it was omitted, and although we can scarcely suppose that the transcendent act which is recorded in my text was performed at the beginning of the meal, yet I think we shall not be wrong if we see in it a reference to the neglected service.

The Evangelist who tells us of the dispute, and does not tell us of the foot-washing, preserves a sentence which finds its true meaning only in this incident, 'I am among you as He that serveth.' And although John is the only recorder of this pathetic incident, there are allusions in other parts of Scripture which seem to hint at it. As, for instance, when Paul speaks of 'taking upon Him the form of a servant'; and still more strikingly when Peter employs the remarkable word, which he does employ in his exhortation, 'Be ye clothed with humility.' For the word rendered there 'clothed' occurs only in that one place in Scripture, and means literally the putting on of a slave's costume. One can scarcely help, then, seeing in these three passages to which I have referred echoes of this incident which John alone preserves to us. And so we get at once a hint of the harmony and of the incompleteness of the Gospel records.

I. Consider the motives of this act.

Now that is ground upon which the Evangelists very seldom enter. They tell us what Christ did, but very rarely do they give us any glimpses into why He did it. But this section of the Gospel is remarkable for its full and careful analysis of what Christ's impelling motives were in the final acts of His life. How did John find out why Christ did this deed? Perhaps he who had 'leaned upon His bosom at supper,' and was evidently very closely associated with Him, may, in some unrecorded hour of intimate communion during the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, have heard from the Master the exposition of His motives. But more probably, I think, the long years of growing likeness to his Lord, and of meditation upon the depth of meaning in the smallest events that his faithful memory recalled, taught him to understand Christ's purpose and motives. 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,' and the liker we get to our Master and the more we are filled with His Spirit, the more easy will it be for us to divine the purpose and the motives of His actions, whether as they are recorded in the Scripture or as they come to us in the experience of daily life.

But, passing that point, I desire for a moment to fix your attention on the twofold key to our Lord's action which is given in this context. There is, first of all, in the first verse of the chapter, a general exposition of what was uppermost in His mind and heart during the whole of the period in the upper room. The act in our text, and the wonderful words which follow in the subsequent chapters, crowned by that great intercessory prayer, seem to me to be all explained for us by this first unveiling of His motives. 'When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.'

And then the words of my text, which apply more specifically to the single incident with which they are brought into connection, tell us in addition why this one manifestation of Christ's love was given. 'Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.' There, then, are two explanations of motive, the one covering a wider area than the other, but both converging on the incident before us.

The first of these is just this—the consciousness of impending separation moved Christ to a more than ordinarily tender manifestation of His love. For the rendering which you will find in the margin of the Revised Version, 'He loved them *to the uttermost*,' seems to me to be truer to the Evangelist's meaning than the other, 'He loved them unto the end.' For it was more to John's purpose to tell us that the shadow of the Cross only brought to the surface in more blessed and wonderful representation the deep love of His heart, than simply to tell us that that shadow did not stop its flow. It is much to know that all through His sorrow He continued to love; it is far more to know that the sorrow sharpened its poignancy, and deepened its depth, and made more tender its tenderness.

How near to the man Christ that thought brings us! Do we not all know the impulse to make parting moments tender moments? The masks of use and wont drop off; the reticence which we, perhaps wisely, ordinarily cultivate in regard to our deepest feelings melts away. We yearn to condense all our unspoken love into some one word, act, look, or embrace, which it may afterwards be life to two hearts to remember. And Jesus Christ felt this. Because He was going away He could not but pour out Himself yet more completely than in the ordinary tenor of His life. The earthquake lays bare hidden veins of gold, and the heart opens itself out when separation impends. We shall never understand the works of Jesus Christ if we do as we are all apt to do, think of them as having only a didactic and doctrinal purpose. We must remember that there is in Him the true play of a human heart, and that it was to relieve His own love, as well as to teach these men their duty, that he rose from the supper, and prepared Himself to wash the disciples' feet.

Then, on the other hand, the other motive which is brought by the Evangelists more immediately into connection with this incident is, 'knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.'

The consciousness of the highest dignity impels to the lowliest submission. 'All things given into His hands,' means universal and absolute dominion. 'That He was come from God,' means pre-existence, voluntary incarnation, an eternal divine nature, and unbroken communion with the Father. 'That He went to God,' means a voluntary departure from this low world, and a return to 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity.'

And, gathered all together, the phrases imply His absolute consciousness of His divine nature. It was that that sent Him with the towel round His loins to wash the foul feet of the pedestrians who had come by the dusty and hot way from Bethany, and through all the abominations of an Eastern city, into the upper chamber.

This was He who from the beginning 'was with God, and was God.' This was He who was the Lord of Death, Victor over the grave. This was He who by His own power ascended up on high, and reigns on the throne of the universe to-day. This was He whose breast the same Evangelist had seen before he wrote his Gospel, 'girded with the golden girdle' of priesthood and of sovereignty; and holding, in the hands that had laid the towel on the disciples' feet, the seven stars.

Oh, brethren! if we believed our creeds, how our hearts would melt with wonder and awe that He who was so high stooped so low! 'Knowing that He came from God, and went to God,' and that even when He was kneeling there before these men, 'the Father had given all things into His hands,' what did He do? Triumph? Show His majesty? Flash His power? Demand service? 'Girded Himself with a towel and washed His disciples' feet'!

The consciousness of loftiness does not alone avail to explain the transcendent lowliness. You need the former motive to be joined with it, because it is only love which bends loftiness to service, and turns the consciousness of superiority into yearning to divest oneself of the superiorities that separate, and to emphasise the emotions which unite.

II. The detailed completeness of the act.

The remarkable particularity of the account of the stages of the humiliation suggests the eye-witness. John carried them all in his mind ineffaceably, and long, long years after that memorable hour we hear him recalling each detail of the scene. We can see the little group startled by the disturbance of the order of the meal as He rose from the table, and the hushed wonder and the open-lipped expectation with which they watched to see what the next step would be. He rises from the table and divests Himself of the upper garments which impeded movement. 'What will He do next?' He takes the basin, standing there to be ready for washing the apostles' feet, but unused, and not even filled with water. He fills it Himself, asking none to help Him. He girds the towel round Him; and then, perhaps, begins with the betrayer; at any rate, not with Peter.

Cannot you see them, as they look? Do not you feel the solemnity of the detailed particular account of each step?

And may we not also say that all is a parable, or illustration, on a lower level, of the very same principles which were at work in the mightier fact of the greater condescension of His 'becoming flesh and dwelling among us'? He 'rose from the table,' as He rose from His place in 'the bosom of the Father.' He disturbed the meal as He broke the festivities of the heavens. He divested Himself of His garments, as 'He thought not equality with God a thing to be worn eagerly'; and 'He girded Himself with the towel,' as He put on the weakness of flesh. Himself He filled the basin, by His own work providing the means of cleansing; and Himself applied the cleansing to the feet of those who were with Him. It is all a working out of the same double motive which drew Him downwards to our earth. The reason why He stooped, with His hands to wash the disciples' feet, is the same as the reason why He had hands to wash with—viz., that knowing Himself to be high over all, and loving all, He chose

to become one with us, that we might become like unto Him. So the details of the act are a parable of His incarnation and death.

III. And then, still further, note the purpose of the deed.

Now although I have said that we never rightly understand our Lord's actions if we are always looking for dogmatic or doctrinal purposes, and thinking of them rather as being lectures, and sometimes rebukes in act, than as being the outgush of His emotions and His human-divine nature, yet we have also to take into account their moral and spiritual lessons. His acts are words and His words are acts. And although the main and primary purpose of this incident, in so far as it had any other purpose than to relieve Christ's own love by manifesting itself, and to comfort the disciples' hearts by the tender manifestation, was to teach them their duty, as we shall presently see, yet the special aspect of cleansing, which comes out so emphatically and prominently in the episode of Peter's refusal, is to be carried all along through the interpretation of the incident. This was the reason why Jesus Christ came from heaven and assumed flesh, and this was the reason why Jesus Christ, assuming flesh, bowed Himself to this menial office—to make men clean.

I venture to say that we never understand Jesus Christ and His work until we recognise this as its prominent purpose, to cleanse us from sin. An inadequate conception of what we need, shallow, superficial views of the gravity and universality and obstinacy of the fact of sin, are an impenetrable veil between us and all real understanding of Jesus Christ. There is no adequate motive for such an astounding fact as the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son of God, except the purpose of redeeming the world. If you do not believe that you—you individually, and all of us your brethren—need to be cleansed, you will find it hard to believe in the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ. If you have been down into the depths of your own heart, and found out what tremendous, diabolic power your own evil nature and sin have upon you, then you will not be content with anything less than the incarnate God who stoops from heaven to bear the burden of your sin, and to take it all away. If you want to understand why He laid aside His garments and took the servile form of our manhood, the appeal of man's sin to His love and the answer of His Divine condescension are the only explanation.

Again, let me remind you that there is no cleansing without Christ. Can you do it for yourselves, do you think? There is an old proverb, 'One hand washes the other.' That is true about stains on the flesh. It is not true about stains on our spirits. Nobody can do it for us but Jesus Christ alone. He kneels before us, having the right and the power to wash us because He has died for us. Kings of England used to touch for 'the king's evil,' and lay their pure fingers upon feculent masses of corruption. Our King's touch is sovereign for the corruption and incipient putrefaction of our sin; and there is no power in heaven or earth that will make a man clean except the power of Jesus Christ. It is either Jesus Christ or filthiness.

If I might pass from my text for one moment, I would remind you of the episode which immediately follows, and suggest that if Jesus Christ is not cleansing us He is nothing to us. 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me.' I know, of course, that it is possible to have partial, rudimentary, and sometimes reverent conceptions of that Lord without recognising in Him the great 'Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.' But I am sure of this, that

there is no real, living possession of Jesus Christ such as men's souls need, and such as will outlast the disintegrating influences of death, unless it be such a possession of Him as appropriates for its own, primarily, His cleansing power. First of all He must cleanse, and then all other aspects of His glory, and gifts of His grace, will pour into our hearts.

No understanding of Christ, then, without the recognition that cleansing is the purpose and the vindication of His incarnation and sacrifice; no cleansing without Christ; no Christ worth calling by the name without cleansing.

IV. And so, lastly, note the pattern in this act.

You will remember that it is followed by solemn words spoken after He had taken His garments and resumed His place at the table, in which there blended, in the most wonderful fashion, the consciousness of authority, both as Teacher of truth and as Guide of life, and the sweetest and most loving lowliness. In them Jesus prescribed the wonderful act of His condescending love and cleansing power as the law of the Christian life. There are too many of us who profess to be quite willing to trust to Jesus Christ as the Cleanser of our souls who are not nearly so willing to accept His Example as the pattern for our lives; and I would have you note, as an extremely remarkable point, that all the New Testament references to our Lord as being our Example are given in immediate connection with His passion. The very part of His life which we generally regard as being most absolutely unique and inimitable is the fact in His life which Apostles and Evangelists select as the one to set before us for our example.

Do you ask if any man can copy the sufferings of Jesus Christ? In regard to their virtue and efficacy, No. In regard to their motive—in one aspect, No; in another aspect, Yes. In regard to the spirit that impelled Him we may copy Him. The smallest trickle of water down a city gutter will carve out of the mud at its side little banks and cliffs, and exhibit all the phenomena of erosion on the largest scale, as the Mississippi does over half a continent, and the tiniest little wave in a basin will fall into the same curves as the billows of mid-ocean. You and I, in our little lives, may even aspire to 'do as I have done to you.'

The true use of superiority is service. *Noblesse oblige*! Bank, wealth, capacity, talents, all things are given to us that we may use them to the last particle for our fellows. Only when the world and society have awakened to that great truth which the towel-girded, kneeling Christ has taught us, will society be organised on the principles that God meant.

But, further, the highest form of service is to cleanse. Cleansing is always dirty work for the cleaners, as every housemaid knows. You cannot make people clean by scolding them, by lecturing them, by patronising them. You have to go down into the filth if you mean to lift them out of it; and leave your smelling-bottles behind; and think nothing repulsive if your stooping to it may save a brother.

The only way by which we can imitate that example is by, first of all, participating in it for ourselves. We must, first of all, have the Cross as our trust, before it can become our pattern and our law. We must first say, 'Lord! not my feet only, but also my hands and my head,' and then, in the measure in which we ourselves have received the cleansing benediction, we shall be impelled and able to lay our gentle hands on foulness and leprosy; and to say to all the impure, 'Jesus Christ, who hath cleansed *me*, makes *thee* clean.'

THE DISMISSAL OF JUDAS

'... Then said Jesus unto Judas, That thou doest, do quickly.'—JOHN xiii. 27.

When our Lord gave the morsel, dipped in the dish, to Judas, only John knew the significance of the act. But if we supplement the narrative here with that given by Matthew, we shall find that, accompanying the gift of the sop, was a brief dialogue in which the betrayer, with unabashed front, hypocritically said, 'Lord! Is it I?' and heard the solemn, sad answer, 'Thou sayest!' Two things, then, appealed to him at the moment: one, the conviction that he was discovered; the other, the wonderful assurance that he was still loved, for the gift of the morsel was a token of friendliness. He shut his heart against them both; and as he shut his heart against Christ he opened it to the devil. So 'after the sop Satan entered into him.' At that moment a soul committed suicide; and none of those that sat by, with the exception of Christ and the 'disciple whom He loved,' so much as dreamed of the tragedy going on before their eyes.

I know not that there are anywhere words more weighty and wonderful than those of our text. And I desire to try if I can at all make you feel as I feel, their solemn signification and force. 'That thou doest, do quickly.'

I. I hear in them, first, the voice of despairing love abandoning the conflict.

If I have rightly construed the meaning of the incident, this is the plain meaning of it. And you will observe that the Revised Version, more accurately and closely rendering the words of our text, begins with a '*Therefore*.' 'Therefore said Jesus unto him,' because the die was cast; because the will of Judas had conclusively welcomed Satan, and conclusively rejected Christ; therefore, knowing that remonstrance was vain, knowing that the deed was, in effect, done, Jesus Christ, that Incarnate Charity which 'believeth all things, and hopeth all things,' abandoned the man to himself, and said, 'There, then, if thou wilt thou must. I have done all I can; my last arrow is shot, and it has missed the target. That then doest, do quickly.'

There is a world of solemn meaning in that one little word 'doest.' It teaches us the old lesson, which sense is so apt to forget, that the true actor in man's deeds is 'the hidden man of the heart,' and that when it has acted, it matters comparatively little whether the mere tool and instrument of the hands or of the other organs have carried out the behest. The thing is done before it is done when the man has resolved, with a fixed will, to do it. The betrayal was as good as in process, though no step beyond the introductory ones, which could easily have been cancelled, had yet been accomplished. Because there was a fixed purpose which could not be altered by anything now, therefore Jesus Christ regards the act as completed. It is what we think in our hearts that we are; and our fixed determinations, our inclinations of will, are far more truly our doings than the mere consequences of these, embodied in actuality. It is but a poor estimate of a man that judges him by the test of what he has done. What he has wanted to do is the true man; what he has attempted to do. 'It was well that it was in thine heart!' saith God to the king who thought of building the

Temple which he was never allowed to rear. 'It is ill that is in thine heart,' says He by whom actions are weighed, to the sinner in purpose, though his clean hands lie idly in his lap. These hidden movements of desire and will that never come to the surface are our true selves. Look after them, and the deeds will take care of themselves. Serpent's eggs have serpents in them. And he that has determined upon a sin has done the sin, whether his hands have been put to it or no.

But, then, turn for a moment to the other thought that is suggested here—that solemn picture of a soul left to do as it will, because divine love has no other restraints which it can impose, and is bankrupt of motives that it can adduce to prevent it from its madness. Now I do not believe, for my part, that any man in this world is so all-round 'sold unto sin' as that the seeking love of God gives him up as irreclaimable. I do not believe that there are any people concerning whom it is true that it is impossible for the grace of God to find some chink and cranny in their souls through which it can enter and change them. There are no hopeless cases as long as men are here. But, then, though there may not be so, in regard to the whole sweep of the man's nature, yet every one of us, over and over again, has known what it is to come exactly into that position in regard to some single evil or other, concerning which we have so set our teeth and planted our feet at such an angle of resistance as that God gives up dealing with us and leaves us, as He did with Balaam when He opposed his covetous inclinations to all the remonstrances of Heaven. God said at last to him 'Go!' because it was the best way to teach him what a fool he had been in wanting to go. Thus, when we determine to set ourselves against the pleadings and the beseechings of divine love, the truest kindness is to fling the reins upon our necks, and let us gallop ourselves into a sweat and weariness, and then we shall be more amenable to the touch of the rein thereafter.

Are there any people whom God is teaching obedience to His light touch, by letting them run their course after some one specific sin? Perhaps there are. At all events, let us remember that that position of being allowed to do as we like is one to which we all tend, in the measure in which we indulge our inclinations, and shut our hearts against God's pleadings. There is such a thing as a conscience seared as with a hot iron. They used to say that there were witches' marks on the body, places where, if you stuck a pin in, there was no feeling. Men cover themselves all over with marks of that sort, which are not sensitive even to the prick of a divine remonstrance, rebuke, or retribution. They 'wipe their mouths and say I have done no harm.' You can tie up the clapper of the bell that swings on the black rock, on which, if you drift, you go to pieces. You can silence the Voice by the simple process of neglecting it. Judas set his teeth against two things, the solemn conviction that Jesus Christ knew his sin, and the saving assurance that Jesus Christ loved him still. And whosoever resists either of these two is getting perilously near to the point where, not in petulance but in pity, God will say, 'Very well, I have called and ye have refused. Now go, and do what you want to do, and see how you like it when it is done. What thou doest, do quickly.' Do you remember the other word, 'If '*twere* done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly'? But since consequences last when deeds are past, perhaps you had better halt before you determine to do them.

II. Now, secondly, I hear in these words the voice of strangely blended majesty and humiliation.

'What thou doest, do!' Judas thought he had got possession of Christ's person, and was His master in a very real sense. When lo! all at once the victim assumes the position of the Lord and commands, showing the traitor that instead of thwarting and counterworking, he was but carrying out the designs of his fancied victim; and that he was an instrument in Christ's hands for the execution of His will. And these two thoughts, how, in effect, all antagonism, all malicious hatred, all violent opposition of every sort but work in with Christ's purpose, and carry out His intention; and how, at the moments of deepest apparent degradation, He towers, in manifest Majesty and Masterhood, seem to me to be plainly taught in the word before us.

He uses his foes for the furtherance of His purpose. That has been the history of the world ever since. 'The floods, O Lord, have lifted up their voice.' And what have they done? Smashing against the breakwater, they but consolidate its mighty blocks, and prove that 'the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.' It has been so in the past, it is so to-day; it will be so till the end. Every Judas is unconsciously the servant of Him whom he seeks to betray; and finds out to his bewilderment that what he meant for a death-blow is fulfilling the very purpose and will of the Lord against whom he has turned.

Again, the combination here, in such remarkable juxtaposition, of the two things, a willing submission to the utmost extremity of shame, which the treasonous heart can froth out in its malice and, at the same time, a rising up in conscious majesty and lordship, are suggested to us by the words before us. That combination of utter lowliness and transcendent loftiness runs through the whole life and history of our Lord. Did you ever think how strong an argument that strange combination, brought out so inartificially throughout the whole of the Gospels, is for their historical veracity? Suppose the problem had been given to poets to create and to set in a series of appropriate scenes a character with these two opposites stamped equally upon it, neither of them impinging upon the domain of the other—viz., utter humility and humiliation in circumstance, and majestic sovereignty and elevation above all circumstances—do you think that any of them could have solved the problem, though—Aeschylus and Shakespeare had been amongst them, as these four men that wrote these four little tracts that we call Gospels have done? How comes it that this most difficult of literary problems has been so triumphantly solved by these men? I think there is only one answer, 'Because they were reporters, and imagined nothing, but observed everything, and repeated what had happened.' He reconciled these opposites who was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, and yet the Eternal Son of the Father; and the Gospels have solved the problem only because they are simple records of its solution by Him.

Wherever in His history there is some trait of lowliness there is by the side of it a flash of majesty. Wherever in His history there is some gleaming out from the veil of flesh of the hidden glory of divinity, there is immediately some drawing of the veil across the glory. And the two things do not contradict nor confuse, but we stand before that double picture of a Christ betrayed and of a Christ commanding His betrayer, and using his treason, and we say, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'

III. Again, I hear the voice of instinctive human weakness.

'That thou doest, do quickly.' It may be doubtful, and some of you perhaps may not be disposed to follow me in my remark, but to my ear that sounds just like the utterance of that instinctive dislike of suspense and of the long hanging over us of the sword by a hair, which we all know so well. Better to suffer than to wait for suffering. The loudest thunder-crash is not so awe-inspiring as the dread silence of nature when the sky is black before the peal rolls through the clouds. Many a martyr has prayed for a swift ending of his troubles. Many a sorrowing heart, that has been sitting cowering under the anticipation of coming evils, has wished that the string could be pulled, as it were, and they could all come down in one cold flood, and be done with, rather than trickle drop by drop. They tell us that the bravest soldiers dislike the five minutes when they stand in rank before the first shot is fired. And with all reverence I venture to think that He who knew all our weaknesses in so far as weakness was not sin, is here letting us see how He, too, desired that the evil which was coming might come quickly, and that the painful tension of expectation might be as brief as possible. That may be doubtful; I do not dwell upon it, but I suggest it for your consideration.

IV. And then I pass on to the last of the tones that I hear in these utterances—the voice of the willing Sacrifice for the sins of the world.

'That thou doest, do quickly.' There is nothing more obvious throughout the whole of the latter portion of the Gospel narrative than the way in which, increasingly towards its close, Jesus seemed to hasten to the Cross. You remember His own sayings: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished. I am come to cast fire on the earth; would it were already kindled!' You remember with what a strange air—I was going to use an inappropriate word, and say, of alacrity; but, at all events, of fixed resolve—He journeyed from Galilee, in that last solemn march to Jerusalem, and how the disciples followed, astonished at the unwonted look of decision and absorption that was printed upon His countenance. If we consider His doings in that last week in Jerusalem, how he courted publicity, how He avoided no encounter with His official enemies, how He sharpened His tones, not exactly so as to provoke, but certainly so as by no means to conciliate, we shall see, I think, in it all, His consciousness that the hour had come, and His absolute readiness and willingness to be offered for the world's sin. He stretches out His hands, as it were, to draw the Cross nearer to Himself, not with any share in the weakness of a fanatical aspiration after martyrdom, but under a far deeper and more wonderful impulse.

Why was Christ so willing, so eager, if I may use the word, that His death should be accomplished? Two reasons, which at the bottom are one, answer the question. He thus hastened to His Cross because He would obey the Father's will, and because He loved the whole world—you and me and all our fellows. We were each in His heart. It was because He wanted to save thee that He said to Judas, 'Do it quickly, that the world's salvation and that man's salvation may be accomplished.' These were the cords that bound Him to the altar. Let us never forget that Judas with his treachery, and rulers with their hostility, and Pilate with his authority, and the soldiers with their nails, and centurions with their lances, and the grim figure of Death itself with its shaft, would have been all equally powerless against Christ if it had not been his loving will to die on the Cross for each of us.

Therefore, brethren, as we hear this voice, let us discern in it the tones which warn us of the danger of yielding to inclination and stifling His rebukes, till He abandons us for the moment in despair; let us hear in it the pathetic voice of a Brother, who knows all our weaknesses and has felt our emotions; let us hear the voice of Sovereign Authority which uses its enemies for its purposes, and is never loftier than when it is most lowly, whose Cross is His throne of glory, whose exaltation is His deepest humiliation, and let us hear a love which, discerning each of us through all the ages and the crowds, went willingly to the Cross because He willed that He should be our Saviour.

And seeing that time is short, and the future precarious, and delay may darken into loss and rejection, let us take these words as spoken to us in another sense, and hear in them the warning that 'to-day, if we will hear His voice, we harden not our hearts,' and when He says to us, in regard to repentance and faith, and Christian consecration and service, 'That thou doest, do quickly,' let us answer, 'I made haste and delayed not, but made haste to keep Thy commandments.'

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

'Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.'—JOHN xiii. 31, 32.

There is something very weird and awful in the brief note of time with which the Evangelist sends Judas on his dark errand. 'He … went immediately out, and it was night.' Into the darkness that dark soul went. That hour was 'the power of darkness,' the very keystone of the black arch of man's sin, and some shadow of it fell upon the soul of Christ Himself.

In immediate connection with the departure of the traitor comes this singular burst of triumph in our text. The Evangelist emphasises the connection by that: '*Therefore*, when he was gone out, Jesus said.' There is a wonderful touch of truth and naturalness in that connection. The traitor was gone. His presence had been a restraint; and now that that 'spot in their feast of charity' had disappeared, the Master felt at ease; and like some stream, out of the bed of which a black rock has been taken, His words flow more freely. How intensely real and human the narrative becomes when we see that Christ, too, felt the oppression of an uncongenial presence, and was relieved and glad at its removal! The departure of the traitor evoked these words of triumph in another way, too. At his going away, we may say, the match was lit that was to be applied to the train. He had gone out on his dark errand, and that brought the Cross within measurable distance of our Lord. Out of a new sense of its nearness He speaks here. So the note of time not only explains to us why our Lord spoke, but puts us on the right track for understanding His words, and makes any other interpretation of them than one impossible. What Judas went to do was the beginning of Christ's glorifying. We have here, then, a triple glorification—the Son of Man glorified in His Cross; God glorified in the Son of Man; and the Son of Man glorified in God. Let us look at these three thoughts for a few moments now.

I. First, we have here the Son of Man glorified in His Cross.

The words are a paradox. Strange, that at such a moment, when there rose up before Christ all the vision of the shame and the suffering, the pain and the death, and the mysterious sense of abandonment, which was worse than them all, He should seem to stretch out His hands to bring the Cross nearer to Himself, and that His soul should fill with triumph!

There is a double aspect under which our Lord regarded His sufferings. On the one hand we mark in Him an unmistakable shrinking from the Cross, the innocent shrinking of His manhood expressed in such words as 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished'; and in such incidents as the agony in Gethsemane. And yet, side by side with that, not overcome by it, but not overcoming it, there is the opposite feeling, the reaching out almost with eagerness to bring the Cross nearer to Himself. These two lie close by each other in His heart. Like the pellucid waters of the Rhine and the turbid

stream of the Moselle, that flow side by side over a long space, neither of them blending discernibly with the other, so the shrinking and the desire were contemporaneous in Christ's mind. Here we have the triumphant anticipation rising to the surface, and conquering for a time the shrinking.

Why did Christ think of His Cross as a glorifying? The New Testament generally represents it as the very lowest point of His degradation; John's Gospel always represents it as the very highest point of His glory. And the two things are both true; just as the zenith of our sky is the nadir of the sky for those on the other side of the world. The same fact which in one aspect sounds the very lowest depth of Christ's humiliation, in another aspect is the very highest culminating point of His glory.

How did the Cross glorify Christ? In two ways. It was the revelation of His heart; it was the throne of His sovereign power.

It was the revelation of His heart. All his life long He had been trying to tell the world how much He loved it. His love had been, as it were, filtered by drops through His words, through His deeds, through His whole demeanour and bearing; but in His death it comes in a flood, and pours itself upon the world. All His life long he had been revealing His heart, through the narrow rifts of His deeds, like some slender lancet windows; but in His death all the barriers are thrown down, and the brightness blazes out upon men. All through His life He had been trying to communicate His love to the world, and the fragrance came from the box of ointment exceeding precious, but when the box was broken the house was filled with the odour.

For Him to be known was to be glorified. So pure and perfect was He, that revelation of His character and glorification of Himself were one and the same thing. Because His Cross reveals to the world for all time, and for eternity, too, a love which shrinks from no sacrifice, a love which is capable of the most entire abandonment, a love which is diffused over the whole surface of humanity and through all the ages, a love which comes laden with the richest and the highest gifts, even the turning of selfish and sinful hearts into its own pure and perfect likeness, therefore does He say, in contemplation of that Cross which was to reveal Him for what He was to the world, and to bring His love to every one of us, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

We can fancy a mother, for instance, in the anticipation of shame, and ignominy, and suffering, and sorrow, and death which she encounters for the sake of some prodigal child, forgetting all the ignominy, and the shame, and the suffering, and the sorrow, and the death, because all these are absorbed in the one thought: 'If I bear them, my poor, wandering, rebellious child will know at last how much I loved him.' So Christ yearns to impart the knowledge of Himself to us, because by that knowledge we may be won to His love and service; and hence when He looks forward to the agony, and contumely, and sorrow of the close, every other thought is swallowed up in this one: 'They will be the means by which the whole world will find out how deep my heart of love to it was.' Therefore does He triumph and say, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

Still further, He regards His Cross as the means of His glorifying, because it is His throne of saving power. The paradoxical words of our text rest upon His profound conviction that in His death He was about to put forth a mightier and diviner power than ever He had

manifested in His life. They are the same in effect and in tone as the great words: 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Now I want you to ask yourselves one question: In what sense is Christ's Cross Christ's glorifying, unless His Cross bears an altogether different relation to His life from what the death of a great teacher or benefactor ordinarily bears to his? It is impossible that Christ could have spoken such words as these of my text if He had simply thought of His death as a Plato or a John Howard might have thought of his, as being the close of his activity for the welfare of his fellows. Unless Christ's death has in it some substantive value, unless it is something more than the mere termination of His work for the world, I see not how the words before us can be interpreted. If His death is His glorifying, it must be because in that death something is done which was not completed by the life, however fair; by the words, however wise and tender; by the works of power, however restorative and healing. Here is something more than these present. What more? This more, that His Cross is the 'propitiation for the sins of the whole world.' He is glorified therein, not as a Socrates might be glorified by his calm and noble death; not because nothing in His life became Him better than the leaving of it; not because the page that tells the story of His passion is turned to by us as the tenderest and most sacred in the world's records; but because in that death He wrestled with and overcame our foes, and because, like the Jewish hero of old, dying, He pulled down the house which our tyrants had built, and overwhelmed them in its ruins. 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

And so, brethren, there blend, in that last act of our Lord's—for His death was His act—in strange fashion, the two contradictory ideas of glory and shame; like some sky, all full of dark thunderclouds, and yet between them the brightest blue and the blazing sunshine. In the Cross, Death crowns Him the Prince of Life, and His Cross is His throne. All His life long He was the Light of the World, but the very noontide hour of His glory was that hour when the shadow of eclipse lay over all the land, and He hung on the Cross dying in the dark. At His 'eventide it was light.' 'He endured the Cross, despising the shame'; and lo! the shame flashed up into the very brightness of glory, and the ignominy and the suffering became the jewels of His crown. 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.'

II. Now let us turn for a moment to the second of the threefold glorifications that are set forth here: God glorified in the Son of Man.

The mystery deepens as we advance. That God should be glorified in a man is not strange, but that He should be so glorified in the eminent and special fashion which Jesus contemplates here, is strange; and stranger still when we think that the act in which He was to be glorified was the death of an innocent Man. If God, in any special and eminent manner, is glorified in the Cross of Jesus Christ, that implies, as it seems to me, two things at all events—many more which I have not time to touch upon, but two things very plainly. One is that 'God was in Christ,' in some singular and eminent manner. If all His life was a continual manifestation of the divine character, if Christ's words were the divine wisdom, if Christ's compassion was the divine pity, if Christ's lowliness was the divine gentleness, if His whole human life and nature were the brightest and clearest manifestation to the world of what God is, we can understand that the Cross was the highest point of the revelation of the divine nature to the world, and so was the glorifying of God in Him. But if we take any lower view of the relation between God and Christ, I know not how we can acquit these words of our Master of the charge of being a world too wide for the facts of the case.

The words involve, as it seems to me, not only that idea of a close, unique union and indwelling of God in Christ, but they involve also this other: that these sufferings bore no relation to the deserts of the person who endured them. If Christ, with His pure and perfect character—the innocency and nobleness of which all that read the Gospels admit—if Christ suffered so; if the highest virtue that was ever seen in this world brought no better wages than shame and spitting and the Cross; if Christ's life and Christ's death are simply a typical example of the world's treatment of its greatest benefactors; then, if they have any bearing at all on the character of God, they cast a shadow rather than a light upon the divine government, and become not the least formidable of the difficulties and knots that will have to be untied hereafter before it shall be clear that God did everything well. But if we can say, 'He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows'; if we can say, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'; if we can say, that His death was the death of Him whom God had appointed to live and die for us, and 'to bear our sins in His own body on the tree,' then, though deep mysteries come with the thought, still we can see that, in a very unique manner, God is glorified and exalted in His death.

For if the dying Christ be the Son of God dying for us, then the Cross glorifies God, because it teaches us that the glory of the divine character is the divine love. Of wisdom, or of power, or of any of the more 'majestic' attributes of the divine nature, that weak Man, hanging dying on the Cross, was a strange embodiment; but if the very heart of the divine brightness be the pure white fire of love; if there be nothing diviner in God than His giving of Himself to His creatures; if the highest glory of the divine nature be to pity and to bestow, then the Cross upon which Christ died towers above all other revelations as the most awful, the most sacred, the most tender, the most complete, the most heart-touching, the most soul-subduing manifestation of the divine nature; and stars and worlds, and angels and mighty creatures, and things in the heights and things in the depths, to each of which have been entrusted some broken syllables of the divine character to make known to the world, dwindle and fade before the brightness, the lambent, gentle brightness that beams out from the Cross of Christ, which proclaims—God is love, is pity, is pardon.

And is it not so—is it not so? Is not the thought that has flowed from Christ's Cross through Christendom of what our Father in Heaven is, the highest and the most blessed that the world has ever had? Has it not scattered doubts that lay like mountains of ice upon man's heart? Has it not swept the heavens clear of clouds that wrapped it in darkness? Has it not delivered men from the dreams of gods angry, gods capricious, gods vengeful, gods indifferent, gods simply mighty and vast and awful and unspeakable? Has it not taught us that love is God, and God is love; and so brought to the whole world the true Gospel, the Gospel of the grace of God? In that Cross the Father is glorified.

III. Now, lastly, we have here the Son of Man glorified in the Father.

The mysteries and the paradoxes seem to deepen as we advance. 'If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.' Do these words sound to you as if they expressed no more than the confidence of a good man, who, when he was dying, believed that he would be accepted of a loving Father, and would be at rest from his sufferings? To me they seem to say infinitely more than that. 'He shall also glorify Him in Himself.' Mark that 'in Himself.' That is the obvious antithesis to what has been spoken about in the previous clause, a glorifying which consisted in a manifestation to

the external universe, whereas this is a glorifying within the depths of the divine nature. And the best commentary upon it is our Lord's own words: 'Father! glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.' We get a glimpse, as it were, into the very centre of the brightness of God; and there, walking in that beneficent furnace, we see 'One like unto the Son of Man.' Christ anticipates that, in some profound and unspeakable sense, He shall, as it were, be caught up into the divinity, and shall dwell, as indeed He did dwell from the beginning, 'in the bosom of the Father.' 'He shall glorify Him in Himself.'

But then mark, still further, that this reception into the bosom of the Father is given to the Son of Man. That is to say, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Brother of us all, 'bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh,' the very Person that walked upon earth and dwelt amongst us is taken up into the heart of God, and in His manhood enters into that same glory, which, from the beginning, the Eternal Word had with God.

And still further, not only have we here set forth, in most wondrous language, the reception and incorporation, if we may use such words, into the very centre of divinity, as granted to the Son of Man, but we have that glorifying set forth as commencing immediately upon the completion of God's glorifying by Christ upon the Cross. 'He shall straightway glorify Him.' At the instant then, that He said, 'It is finished,' and all that the Cross could do to glorify God was done, at that instant there began, with not a pin-point of interval between them, God's glorifying of the Son in Himself. It began in that Paradise into which we know that upon that day He entered. It was manifested to the world when He 'raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory.' It reached a still higher point when 'they brought Him near unto the Ancient of Days,' and ascending up on high, a dominion and a throne and a glory were given to Him which last now, whilst the Son of Man sits in the heavens on the throne of His glory, wielding the attributes of divinity, and administering the laws of the universe and the mysteries of providence. It shall rise to its highest manifestation before an assembled world, when He 'shall come in His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations.'

This, then, was the vision that lay before the Christ in that upper room, the vision of Himself glorified in His extreme shame, because His Cross manifested His love and His saving power; of God glorified in Him above all other of His acts of manifestation when He died on the Cross, and revealed the very heart of God; and of Himself glorified in the Father when, exalted high above all creatures, He sitteth upon the Father's throne and rules the Father's realm.

And yet from that high, and, to us, inaccessible and all but inconceivable summit of His elevation, He looks down ready to bless each poor creature here, toiling and moiling amidst sufferings, and meannesses, and commonplaces, and monotony, if we will only put our trust in Him, and love Him, and see the brightness of the Father's face in Him. He cares for us all; and if we will but take Him as our Saviour, His all-prevalent prayer, presented within the veil for us, will certainly be fulfilled at last: 'Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.'

CANNOT AND CAN

'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

The preceding context shows how large and black the Cross loomed before Jesus now, and how radiant the glory beyond shone out to Him. But it was only for a moment that either of these two absorbed His thoughts; and with wonderful self-forgetfulness and self-command, He turned away at once from the consideration of how the near future was to affect Him, to the thought of how it was to affect the handful of helpless disciples who had to be left alone. Impending separation breaks up the fountains of the heart, and we all know the instinct that desires to crowd all the often hidden love into some one last token. So here our Lord addresses His disciples by a name that is never used except this once, 'little children,' a fond diminutive that not only reveals an unusual depth of tender emotion, but also breathes a pitying sense of their defencelessness when they are to be left alone. So might a dying mother look at her little ones.

But the words that follow, at first sight, are dark with the sense of a final and complete separation. 'Ye shall seek Me'—and not only so, but He seems to put back His humble friends into the same place as had been occupied by His bitter foes—'as I said to the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you.' There was something that prevented both classes alike from keeping Him company; and He had to walk His path both into the darkness and into the glory, alone.

The words apply in their fullness only to the parenthesis of time whilst He lay in the grave, and the disciples despairingly thought that all was ended. It was a brief period: it was a revolutionary moment; and though it was soon to end, they needed to be guarded against it. But though the words do not apply to the permanent relation between the glorified Christ and us, His disciples, yet partly by similarity, and still more by contrast, they do suggest great Christian blessedness and imperative Christian duties. These gather themselves mainly round two contrasts, a transitory 'cannot' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can'; and a momentary seeking, soon to be converted into a blessed seeking which finds. I now deal only with the former.

We have here a transitory 'cannot' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can.'

'Whither I go ye cannot come.' Does not one hear a tone of personal sorrow in that saying? Jesus had always hungered for understanding and sympathetic companions, and one of His lifelong sorrows had been His utter loneliness; but He had never, in all the time that He had been with them, so put out His hand, feeling for some warm clasp of a human hand to help Him in His struggle, as He did during the hours terminating with Gethsemane. And perhaps we may venture to say that we hear in this utterance an expression of Christ's sorrow for Himself that He had to tread the dark way, and to pass into the brightness beyond, all alone. He yearned for the impossible human companionship, as well as sorrowed for the imperfections which made it impossible.

Why was it that they could not 'follow Him now'? The answer to that question is found in the consideration of whither it was that He went. When that bright Shekinah-cloud at the Ascension received Him into its radiant folds, it showed why they could not follow Him, because it revealed that He went unto the Father, when He left the world. So we are brought face to face with the old, solemn thought that character makes capacity for heaven. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?' asked the Psalmist; and a prophet put the question in a still sharper form, and by the very form of the question suggested a negative answer—'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' Who can pass into that Presence, and stand near God, without being, like the maiden in the old legend, shrivelled into ashes by the contact of the celestial fire? 'Holiness' is that 'without which no man shall see the Lord.' And we, all of us, in the depths of our own hearts, if we rightly understand the voices that ever echo there, must feel that the condition which is, obviously and without any need for arguing it, required for abiding with God, and so going into the glory where Christ is, is a condition which none of us can fulfil. In that respect the imperfect and immature friends, the little children, the babes who loved and yet knew not Him whom they loved, and the scowling enemies, were at one. For they had all of them the one human heart, and in that heart the deep-lying alienation and contrariety to God. Therefore Christ trod the winepress alone, and alone 'ascended up where He was before.'

But let us remember that this 'cannot' was only a transitory cannot. For we must underscore very deeply that word in my text 'so *now* I say to you,' and a moment afterwards, when one of the Apostles puts the question: 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' the answer is: 'Thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.' The text, too, is succeeded immediately by the wonderful parting consolations and counsels spoken to the disciples, through all of which there gleams the promise that they will be with Him where He is, and behold His glory. Set side by side with these sad words of our Lord in the text, by which He unloosed their clasping hands from Him, and turned His face to His solitary path, the triumphant language in which habitually the rest of the New Testament speaks of the Christian man's relation to Christ. Think of that great passage: 'Ye are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, … and to God the Judge of all, … and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant.' What has become of the impossibility? Vanished. Where is the 'cannot'? Turned into a blessed 'can.' And so Apostles have no scruple in saying, 'Our citizenship is in Heaven,' nor in saying, 'We sit together with Him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' The path that was blocked is open. The impossibility that towered up like a great black wall has melted away; and the path into the Holiest of all is made patent by the blood of Christ. For in that death there lies the power that sweeps away all the impediments of man's sin, and in that life of the risen, glorified, indwelling Christ there lies the power which cleanses the inmost heart from 'all filthiness of flesh and spirit,' and makes it possible for our mortal feet to walk on the immortal path, and for us, with all our unworthiness, with all our shrinking, to stand in His presence and not be ashamed or consumed. 'Ye cannot come' was true for a few days. 'Ye can come' is true for ever; and for all Christian men.

But let us not forget that the one attitude of heart and mind, by which a poor, sinful man, who dare not draw near to God, receives into himself the merit and power of the death, and

the indwelling power of the life, of Jesus Christ, is personal faith in Jesus Christ. To trust Him is to come to Him, and it is represented in Scripture as conferring an instantaneous fitness for access to God. People pray sometimes that they may be made 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and the prayer is, in a sense, wise and true. But they too often forget that the Apostle says, in the original connection of the words which they so quote: 'He *hath* translated us from the tyranny of the darkness, and *hath* made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' That is to say, whenever a poor soul, compassed and laden with its infirmity and sin, turns itself to that Lord whose Cross conquers sin, and whose blood infused into our veins—the Spirit of whose life granted to us—gives us to partake of His own righteousness, that moment that soul can tread the path that brings into the presence of God, and 'has access with confidence by the faith of Him.' So, brethren, seeing that thus the incapacity may all be swept away, and that instead of a 'cannot,' which relegates us to darkness, we may receive a 'can' which leads us into the light, let us see to it that this communion, which is possible for all Christian men, is real in our cases, and that we use the access which is given to us, and dwell for ever in, and with, the Lord.

I have said that the act of faith, by associating a man with Jesus Christ in the power of His death and of His life, makes any who exercise it capable of passing into the presence of God. But I would remind you, too, that to make us more fit for more full and habitual communion is the very purpose for which all the discipline of our earthly life, its sorrows and its joys, its tasks and its repose, is exercised upon us—'He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.' Surely if we habitually took that point of view in reference to our work, in reference to our joys, in reference to our trials, everything would be different. We are being prepared with sedulous love, with patient reiteration of 'line upon line, precept upon precept,' with singularly varied methods but a uniform purpose, by all that meets us in life, to be more capable of treading the eternal path into the eternal light. Is that how we daily think of our own circumstances? Do we bring that great thought to bear upon all that we, sometimes faithlessly, call mysterious or murmuringly think of—if we dare not speak our thought—as being cruel and hard? What does it matter if some precious things be lifted off our shoulders, and out of our hearts, if their being taken away makes it more possible for us to tread with a lighter step the path of peace? What matters it though many things that we would fain keep are withdrawn from us, if by the withdrawal we are sent a little further forward on the road that leads to God? As George Herbert says, sorrows and joys are like battledores that drive a shuttlecock, and they may all 'toss us to His breast.' In faith, however infantile it may be, there is an undeveloped capacity, a germ of fitness, for dwelling with God. But that capacity is meant to be increased, and the little children are meant to be helped to grow up into full-grown men, 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,' by all that comes here to them on earth. Do you not think we should understand life better, do you not think it would all be flashed up into new radiance, do you not think we should more seldom stand bewildered at what we choose to call the inscrutable dispensations of Providence, if this were the point of view from which we looked at them all—that they were fitting us for perpetual abiding with our Father God?

Nor let us forget that there was a transient 'cannot' of another sort. For 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.' So, as life is changed when we think of it as helping us toward Him, death is changed when we think of it as being, if I may so say, the usher in

attendance on the Presence-chamber, who draws back the thin curtain that separates us from the throne, and takes us by the hands and leads us into the Presence. Surely if we habitually thought thus of that otherwise grim chamberlain, we should be willing to put our hands into His, as a little child will, when straying, into the hands of a stranger who says, 'Come with me and I will take you home to your father.' 'As I said unto the Jews … so now I say to you, whither I go, ye cannot come.'

Let us press on you and on myself the one thought that comes out of all that I have been saying, the blessed possibility, which, because it is a possibility, is an obligation, to use far more than most of us do, the right of access to the King who is our Father. There are nobles and corporate bodies, who regard it as one of their chief distinctions that they have always the right of *entree* to the court of the sovereign. Every Christian man has that. And in old days, when a baron did not show himself at court, suspicion naturally arose, and he was in danger of being thought disaffected, if not traitorous. Ah! if you and I were judged according to that law, what would become of us? We can go when we like. How seldom we do go! We can live in the heavens whilst our work lies down here. We prefer the low earth to the lofty sky. 'We are come'—ideally, and in the depths of our nature, our affinities are there—'unto God, the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant.' Are we come? Are we day by day, in all the pettiness of our ordinary lives, when compassed by hard duties, weighed upon by sore distress—still keeping our hearts in heaven, and our feet familiar with the path that leads us to God? 'Set your affection on things above, where Jesus is, sitting at the right hand of God.' For there is no 'cannot' for His servants in regard to their access to any place where He is.

SEEKING JESUS

'... Ye shall seek Me.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

In the former sermon on this verse I pointed out that it, in its fullness, applies only to the brief period between the crucifixion and the resurrection, but that, partly by contrast and partly by analogy, it suggests permanent relations between Christ and His disciples. These relations were mainly—as I pointed out then—two: there was that one expressed by the subsequent words of the verse, 'Whither I go, ye cannot come'—a brief 'cannot,' soon to be changed into a permanent 'can'; and there was a second, a brief, sad, and vain seeking, soon to be changed into a seeking which finds. It is to the latter that I wish to turn now.

'Ye shall seek Me' fell, like the clods on a coffin-lid, with a hollow sound on the hearts of the Apostles. It comes to us as a permission and a command and a promise. I do not dwell on that sad seeking, which was so brief but so bitter. We all know what it is to put out an empty hand into the darkness and the void, and to grope for a touch which we know, whilst we grope, that we shall not find. And these poor, helpless disciples, by their forlorn sense of separation, by their yearning that brought no satisfaction, by their very listless despair, were saying, during these hours of agony into which an eternity of pain was condensed, 'Oh! that He were beside us again!'

That sad seeking ended when He came to them, and 'then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.' But another kind of seeking began, when 'the cloud received Him out of their sight'; as joyful as the other was laden with sorrow, as sure to find the object of its quest as the other was certain to be disappointed. What He said in the darkness to them, He says in the light to us: What 'I say unto you I say unto all,' *Seek!* So now we have to deal with that joyful search which is sure of finding its object, and is only a little, if at all, less blessed than the finding itself.

I. Every Christian is, by his very name, a seeker after Christ.

There are two kinds of seeking, one like that of a bird whose young have been stolen away, which flutters here and there, because it knows not where that is which it seeks; another, like the flight of the same bird, when the migrating instinct rises in its little breast, and straight as an arrow it goes, not because it knows not its goal, but because it knows it, yonder where the sun is warm and the sky is blue, and winter is left behind in the cold north. 'Ye shall seek Me' is the word of promise, which changes the vain search that is ignorant of where the object of its quest is, into a blessed going out of the heart towards that which it knows to be the home of its homelessness. Thus the text brings out the very central blessedness and peculiarity of the Christian life, that it has no uncertainty in its aims, and that, instead of seeking for things which may or may not be found, or if found may or may not prove to be what we dreamt them to be. It seeks for a Person whom it knows where to find, and of whom it knows that all its desires will be met in Him. We have, then, on the one side the multifarious, divergent searchings of man; and on the other side

the one quest in which all these others are gathered up, and translated into blessedness—the seeking after Jesus Christ.

Men know that they need, if I may so put it, four things: truth for the understanding, love round which the heart may coil, authority for the will which may direct and restrain, and energy for the practical life. But, apart from the quest after Christ, men for the most part seek these necessary goods in divers objects, and fragmentarily look for the completion of their desires. But fragments will never satisfy a man's soul, and they who have to go to one place for truth, and to another for love, and to another for authority, and to another for energy, are wofully likely never to find what they search for. They are seeking in the manifold what can be found only in the One. It is as if some vessel, full of precious stones, were thrown down before men, and whilst they are racing after the diamonds, they lose the emeralds and the sapphires. But the wise concentrate their seekings on the 'one Pearl of great price,' in whom is truth for the brain, love for the heart, authority for the will, power for the life, and all summed in that which is more blessed than all, the Person of the Brother who died for us, the Christ who lives to fill our hearts for ever. One sun dims all the stars; and the 'one entire and perfect Chrysolite' beggars and reduces to fragments 'all the precious things that thou canst desire.'

To seek Him is the very hall-mark of a Christian, and that seeking comes to be an earnest desire and effort after more conscious communion with Him, and a more entire possession of His imparted life which is righteousness and peace and joy and power. According to the Rabbis, the manna tasted to each man what each man most desired. The manifoldness of the one Christ is far more manifold than the manifoldness of the multiplicity of fragmentary and partial aims which foolish men perceive.

The ways of seeking are very plain. First of all, we seek if, and in proportion as, we make the effort to occupy our thoughts and minds, not with theological dogmas, but with the living Christ Himself. Ah! brethren, it is hard to do, and I daresay a great many of you are thinking that it is far harder for you, in the distractions and rush and conflict of business and daily life, than it is for people like me, whom you imagine as sitting in a study, with nothing to distract us. I do not know about that; I fancy it is about equally hard for us all; but it is possible. I have been in Alpine villages where, at the end of every squalid alley, there towered up a great, pure, silent, white peak. That is what our lives may be; however noisome, crowded, petty the little lane in which we live, the Alp is at the end of it there, if we only choose to lift our eyes and look. It is possible that not only 'into the sessions of sweet silent thought,' but into the rush and bustle of the workshop or the exchange, there may come, like 'some sweet, beguiling melody, so sweet we know not we are listening to it,' the thought that changes pettiness into greatness, that makes all things go smoothly and easily, that is a test and a charm to discover and to destroy temptation, the thought of a present Christ, the Lover of my soul, and the Helper of my life.

Again, we seek Him when, by aspiration and desire, we bring Him—as He is always brought thereby—into our hearts and into our lives. The measure of our desire is the measure of our possession. Wishing is the opening of our hearts, but, alas, often we wish and desire, and the heart opens and nothing enters. Wishes are like the tentacles of some marine organism waving about in a waste ocean, feeling for the food that they do not find. But if we open our hearts for Him, that is simultaneous with the coming of Him to us. 'Ye

have not, because ye ask not.' Do not forget, dear friends, that desire, if it is genuine, will take a very concrete form and will be prayer. And it is prayer—by which I do not mean the utterance of words without desire, any more than I mean desire without the direct casting of it into the form of supplication—it is prayer that brings Christ into any, and it is prayer that will bring Him into every, life.

Nor let us forget that there is another way of seeking besides these two, of looking up to Him through, and in the midst of, all the shows and trifles of this low life, and the reaching out of our desires towards Him, as the roots of a tree beneath the soil go straight for the river. That other way is imitation and obedience. It is vain to think of Him, and it is unreal to pretend to desire Him, if we are not seeking Him by treading in the path that He has trod, and which leads to Him. Imitation and obedience—these are the steps by which we go straight through all the trivialities of life into the presence of the Lord Himself. The smallest deflection from the path that leads to Him will carry us away into doleful wastes. The least invisible cloud that steals across the sky will blot out half a hemisphere of stars; and we seek not Christ unless, thinking of Him, and desiring Him, we also walk in the path in which He has walked, and so come where He is. He Himself has said that if His servant follows Him, where He is there shall also His servant be. These things make up the seeking which ought to mark us all.

I note that—

II. The Christian seeker always finds.

I pointed out in my last sermon the strange identity of our Lord's words to His humble friends, with those which on another occasion He used to His bitter enemies. He reminds the disciples of that identity in the verse from which my text comes: 'As I said to the Jews … so now I say to you.' But there was one thing that He said to the Jews that He did not say to them. To the former He said, 'Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me'; and He did not say that—even for the sad hours it was not quite true—He did not say that to His followers, and He does not say it to us.

If we seek we shall find. There is no disappointment in the Christian life. Anything is possible rather than that a man should desire Christ and not have Him. That has never been the experience of any seeking soul. And so I urge upon you what has already been suggested, that inasmuch as, by reason of His infinite longing to give truth and love and guidance and energy and His whole Self, to all of us, the amount of our possession of the power and life of Jesus Christ depends on ourselves. If you take to the fountain a tiny cup, you will only bring away a tiny cupful. If you take a great vessel you will bring *it* away full. As long as the woman in the old story held out her vessels to the miraculous flow of the oil, the flow continued. When she had no more vessels to take, the flow stopped. If a man holds a flagon beneath a spigot with an unsteady hand, half of the precious liquor will be spilt on the ground. Those who fulfil the conditions, of which I have already been speaking, may make quite sure that according to their faith will it be unto them. And if you, dear friend, have not in your experience the conscious presence of a Christ who is all that you need, there is no one in heaven or earth or hell to blame for it but only your own self. 'I have never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain'; and when the Lord said, 'Ye

shall seek Me,' He was implicitly binding Himself to meet the seeking soul, and give Himself to the desiring heart.

Remember, too, that this seeking, which is always crowned with finding, is the only search in which failure is impossible. There is only one course of life that has no disappointments. We all know how frequently we are foiled in our quests; we all know how often a prize won is a bitterer disappointment than a prize unattained. Like a jelly-fish in the water, as long as it is there its tenuous substance is lovely, expanded, tinged with delicate violets and blues, and its long filaments float in lines of beauty. Lay it on the beach, and it is a shapeless lump, and it poisons and stings. You fish your prize out of the great ocean, and when you have it, does it disappoint, or does it fulfil, the raised expectations of the quest? There is One who does not disappoint. There is one gold mine that comes up to the prospectus. There is one spring that never runs dry. The more deep our Christian experience is, the more we shall take the rapturous exclamation of the Arabian queen to ourselves: 'The half was not told us!'

And so, lastly, I suggest that—

III. The finding impels to fresh seeking.

The object of the Christian man's quest is Jesus Christ. He is Incarnate Infinitude; and that cannot be exhausted. The seeker after Jesus Christ is the Christian soul. That soul is the incarnate possibility of indefinite expansion and approximation and assimilation; and that cannot be exhausted. And so, with a Christ who is infinite, and a seeker whose capacities may be indefinitely expanded, there can be no satiety, there can be no limit, there can be no end to the process. This wine-skin will not burst when the new wine is put into it. Rather like some elastic vessel, as you pour it will fill out and expand. Possession enlarges, and the more of Christ's fullness is poured into a human heart, the more is that heart widened out to receive a greater blessing.

Dear brethren, there is one course of life, and I believe but one, on which we may all enter with the sure confidence that in the nature of things, in the nature of Christ, and in the nature of ourselves, there is no end to growth and progress. Think of the freshness and blessedness and energy that puts into a life. To have an unattained and unattainable object, a goal to which we can never come, but to which we may ever be approximating, seems to me to be the secret of perpetual joy and of perpetual youthfulness. To say, 'forgetting the things that are behind, I reach forward unto the things that are before,' is a charm and an amulet that repels monotony and weariness, and goes with a man to the very end, and when all other aims and objects have died down into grey ashes, that flame, like the fabled lamp in Virgil's tomb, burns clear in the grave, and lights us to the eternity beyond.

For certainly, if there be neither satiety nor limit to Christian progress here, there can be no better and stronger evidence that Christian progress here is but the first 'lap' of the race, the first *stadium* of the course, and that beyond that narrow, dark line which lies across the path, it runs on, rising higher, and will run on for ever.

'On earth the broken arc; in heaven the perfect round.'

Seek for what you are sure to find; seek for what will never disappoint you; seek for what will abide with you for ever. The very first word of Christ's recorded in Scripture is a question which He puts to us all: '*What* seek ye?' Well for us, if like the two to whom it was

originally addressed, we answer, 'We are not seeking a What; we are seeking a Whom.—Master, where dwellest Thou?' And if we have that answer in our hearts, we shall receive the invitation which they received, 'Come and see,'—come and seek. 'Ye shall seek Me' is a gracious invitation, an imperative command, and a faithful promise that if we seek we shall find. 'Whoso findeth *Him* findeth life; whoso misseth *Him*'—whatever else he has sought and found—'wrongeth his own soul.'

'AS I HAVE LOVED'

'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.'—JOHN xiii. 34, 35.

Wishes from dying lips are sacred. They sink deep into memories and mould faithful lives. The sense of impending separation had added an unwonted tenderness to our Lord's address, and He had designated His disciples by the fond name of 'little children.' The same sense here gives authority to His words, and moulds them into the shape of a command. The disciples had held together because He was in their midst. Will the arch stand when the keystone is struck out? Will not the spokes fall asunder when the nave of the wheel is taken away? He would guard them from the disintegrating tendencies that were sure to set in when He was gone; and He would point them to a solace for His absence, and to a kind of substitute for His presence. For to love the brethren whom they see would be, in some sense, a continuing to love the Christ whom they had ceased to see. And so, immediately after He said: 'Whither I go ye cannot come,' He goes on to say: 'Love one another as I have loved you.'

He called this a 'new commandment,' though to love one's neighbour as one's self was a familiar commonplace amongst the Jews, and had a recognised position in Rabbinical teaching. But His commandment proposed a new object of love, it set forth a new measure of love, so greatly different from all that had preceded it as to become almost a new kind of love, and it suggested and supplied a new motive power for love. This commandment 'could give life' and fulfil itself. Therefore it comes to us as a 'new commandment'—even to us—and, unlike the words which preceded it, which we were considering in former sermons, it is wholly and freshly applicable to-day as in the ages that are passed. I ask you, first, to consider—

I. The new scope of the new commandment.

'Love one another.' The newness of the precept is realised, if we think for a moment of the new phenomenon which obedience to it produced. When the words were spoken, the then-known civilised Western world was cleft by great, deep gulfs of separation, like the crevasses in a glacier, by the side of which our racial animosities and class differences are merely superficial cracks on the surface. Language, religion, national animosities, differences of condition, and saddest of all, difference of sex, split the world up into alien fragments. A 'stranger' and an 'enemy' were expressed in one language, by the same word. The learned and the unlearned, the slave and his master, the barbarian and the Greek, the man and the woman, stood on opposite sides of the gulfs, flinging hostility across. A Jewish peasant wandered up and down for three years in His own little country, which was the very focus of narrowness and separation and hostility, as the Roman historian felt when he called the Jews the 'haters of the human race'; He gathered a few disciples, and He was crucified by a contemptuous Roman governor, who thought that the life of one fanatical Jew

was a small price to pay for popularity with his troublesome subjects, and in a generation after, the clefts were being bridged and all over the Empire a strange new sense of unity was being breathed, and 'Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free,' male and female, Jew and Greek, learned and ignorant, clasped hands and sat down at one table, and felt themselves 'all one in Christ Jesus.' They were ready to break all other bonds, and to yield to the uniting forces that streamed out from His Cross. There never had been anything like it. No wonder that the world began to babble about sorcery, and conspiracies, and complicity in unnameable vices. It was only that the disciples were obeying the 'new commandment,' and a new thing had come into the world—a community held together by love and not by geographical accidents or linguistic affinities, or the iron fetters of the conqueror. You sow the seed in furrows separated by ridges, and the ground is seamed, but when the seed springs the ridges are hidden, no division appears, and as far as the eye can reach, the cornfield stretches, rippling in unbroken waves of gold. The new commandment made a new thing, and the world wondered.

Now then, brethren, do not let us forget that, although to obey this commandment is in some respects a great deal harder to-day than it was then, the diverse circumstances in which Christian individuals and Christian communities are this day placed may modify the form of our obedience, but do not in the smallest degree weaken the obligation, for the individual Christian and for societies of Christians, to follow this commandment. The multiplication of numbers, the cessation of the armed hostility of the world, the great varieties in intellectual position in regard to the truths of Christianity, divergencies of culture, and many other things, are separating forces, But our Christianity is worth very little, if it cannot master these separating tendencies, even as in the early days of freshness, the Christianity that sprang in these new converts' minds mastered the far more powerful separating tendencies with which they had to contend.

Every Christian man is under the obligation to recognise his kindred with every other Christian man—his kindred in the deep foundations of his spiritual being, which are far deeper, and ought to be far more operative in drawing together, than the superficial differences of culture or opinion or the like, which may part us. The bond that holds Christian men together is their common relation to the one Lord, and that ought to influence their attitude to one another. You say I am talking commonplaces. Yes; and the condition of Christianity this day is the sad and tragical sign that the commonplaces need to be talked about, till they are rubbed into the conscience of the Church as they never have been before.

Do not let us suppose that Christian love is mere sentiment. I shall have to speak a word or two about that presently, but I would fain lift the whole subject, if I can, out of the region of mere unctuous words and gush of half-feigned emotion, which mean nothing, and would make you feel that it is a very practical commandment, gripping us hard, when our Lord says to us, 'Love one another.'

I have spoken about the accidental conditions which make obedience to this commandment difficult. The real reason which makes the obedience to it difficult is the slackness of our own hold on the Centre. In the measure in which we are filled with Jesus Christ, in that measure will that expression of His spirit and His life become natural to us. Every Christian has affinities with every other Christian, in the depths of his being, so as

that he is a great deal more like his brother, who is possessor of 'like precious faith,' however unlike the two may be in outlook, in idiosyncrasy, and culture and in creed, than he is to another man with whom he may have a far closer sympathy in all these matters than he has with the brother in question, but from whom he is parted by this, that the one trusts and loves and obeys Jesus Christ, and the other does not. So, for individuals and for churches, the commandment takes this shape—Go down to the depths and you will find that you are closer to the Christian man or community which seems furthest from you, than you are to the non-Christian who seems nearest to you. Therefore, let your love follow your kinship, and your heart recognise the oneness that knits you together. That is a revolutionary commandment; what would become of our present organisations of Christianity if it were obeyed? That is a revolutionary commandment; what would become of our individual relations to the whole family who, in every place, and in many tongues, and with many creeds, call on Jesus as on their Lord, their Lord and ours, if it were obeyed? I leave you to answer the question. Only I say the commandment has for its first scope all who, in every place, love the Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is more than that involved in it. The very same principle which makes this love to one another imperative upon all disciples, makes it equally imperative upon every follower of Jesus Christ to embrace in a real affection all whom Jesus so loved as to die for them. If I am to love a Christian man because he and I love Christ, I am to love everybody, because Christ loves me and everybody, and because He died on the Cross for me and for all men. And so one of the other Apostles, or, at least, the letter which goes by his name, laid hold on the true connection when, instead of concentrating Christian affection on the Church, and letting the world go to the devil as an alien thing, he said: 'Add to your faith,' this, that, and the other, and 'brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity.' The particular does not exclude the general, it leads to the general. The fire kindled upon the hearth gives warmth to all the chamber. The circles are concentric, and the widest sweep is struck from the same middle point as the narrow. So the new commandment does not cut humanity into two halves, but gathers all diversity into one, and spreads the great reconciling of Christian love over all the antagonisms and oppositions of earth. Let me ask you to notice—

II. The example of the new commandment, 'As I have loved you.'

That solemn 'as' lifts itself up before us, shines far ahead of us, ought to draw us to itself in hope, and not to repel us from itself in despair. 'As I have loved'—what a tremendous thing for a man to stand up before his fellows, and say, 'Take Me as the perfect example of perfect love; and let My example—un-dimmed by the mists of gathering centuries, and un-weakened by the change of condition, and circumstance, fresh as ever after ages have passed, and closely-fitting as ever all varieties of human character and condition—stand before you; the ideal that I have realised, and you will be blessed in the proportion in which you seek, though you fail, to realise it!' There is, I venture to believe, only one aspect of Jesus Christ in which such a setting forth of Himself as the perfect Incarnation of perfect love is warrantable; and that is found in the old belief that His very birth was the result of His love, and that His death was the climax of that love. And if so, we have to turn to Bethlehem, and the whole life, and the Cross at its end, as being the Christ-given example and model for our love to our brethren.

What do we see there? I have said that there is too much of mere sickly sentimentality about the ordinary treatment of this great commandment, and that I desired to lift it out of that region into a far nobler, more strenuous, and difficult one. This is what we see in that life and in that death:—First of all—the activity of love—'Let *us* not love in words, but in deed and in truth'; then we see the self-forgetfulness of love—'Even Christ pleased not Himself'; then we see the self-sacrifice of love—'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' And in these three points, on which I would fain enlarge if I might, active love, self-oblivious love, self-sacrificing love, you have the pattern set for us all. Christian love is no mere sickly maiden, full of sentimental emotions and honeyed words. She is a strenuous virgin, girt for service, a heroine ready for dangers, and prepared to be a martyr if it be needful. Love's language is sacrifice. 'I give thee myself,' is its motto. And that is the pattern that is set before us all—'as I have loved you.'

I have tried to show you how the commandment was new in many particulars, and it is for ever new in this particular, that it is for ever before us, unattained, and drawing faithful hearts to itself, and ever opening out into new heroisms and, therefore, blessedness, of self-sacrifice, and ever leading us to confess the differences, deep, tragic, sinful, between us and Him who—we sometimes think too presumptuously—we venture to say is our Lord and Master.

Did you ever see in some great picture gallery a copyist sitting in front of a Raffaelle, and comparing his poor feeble daub, all out of drawing, and with little of the divine beauty that the master had breathed over his canvas, even if it preserved the mere mechanical outline? That is what you and I should do with our lives: take them and put them down side by side with the original. We shall have to do it some day. Had we better not do it now, and try to bring the copy a little nearer to the masterpiece; and let that 'as I have loved you' shine before us and draw us on to unattainable heights?

And now, lastly, we have here—

III. The motive power for obedience to the commandment.

That is as new as all the rest. That 'as' expresses the manner of the love, but it also expresses the motive and the power. It might be translated into the equivalent 'in the fashion in which,' or it might be translated into the equivalent 'since—' 'I have loved you.' The original might bear the rendering, 'that ye also may love one another.' That is to say, what keeps men from obeying this commandment is the instinctive self-regard which is natural to us all. There are muscles in the body which are so constructed that they close tightly; and the heart is something like one of these sphincter muscles—it shuts by nature, especially if there has been anything put inside it over which it can shut and keep it all to itself. But there is one thing that dethrones Self, and enthrones the angel Love in a heart, and that is, that into that heart there shall come surging the sense of the great love 'wherewith I have loved you.' That melts the iceberg; nothing else will.

That love of Christ to us, received into our hearts, and there producing an answering love to Him, will make us, in the measure in which we live in it and let it rule us, love everything and every person that He loves. That love of Jesus Christ, stealing into our hearts and there sweetening the ever-springing 'issues of life,' will make them flow out in glad obedience to any commandment of His. That love of Jesus Christ, received into our hearts, and

responded to by our answering love, will work, as love always does, a magical transformation. A great monastic teacher wrote his precious book about *The Imitation of Christ*. 'Imitation' is a great word, 'Transformation' is a greater. 'We all,' receiving on the mirror of our loving hearts the love of Jesus Christ, 'are changed into the same likeness.' Thus, then, the love, which is our pattern, is also our motive and our power for obedience, and the more we bring ourselves under its influences, the more we shall love all those who are beloved by, and lovers of, Jesus.

That is the one foundation for a world knit together in the bonds of amity and concord. There have been attempts at brotherhood, and the guillotine has ended what was begun in the name of 'fraternity.' Men build towers, but there is no cement between the bricks, unless the love of Christ holds them together, and therefore Babel after Babel comes down about the ears of its builders. But notwithstanding all that is dark to-day, and though the war-clouds are lowering, and the hearts of men are inflamed with fierce passions, Christ's commandment is Christ's promise; and though the vision tarry, it will surely come. So even to-day Christian men ought to stand for Christ's peace, and for Christ's love. The old commandment which we have had from the beginning, is the new commandment that fits to-day as it fits all the ages. It is a dream, say some. Yes, a dream; but a morning dream which comes true. Let us do the little we can to make it true, and to bring about the day when the flock of men will gather round the one Shepherd, who loved them to the death, and who has bid them and helped them to 'love one another as'—and since—'He has loved them.'

QUO VADIS?

'Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now! I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.'—JOHN xiii. 37, 38.

Peter's main characteristics are all in operation here; his eagerness to be in the front, his habit of blurting out his thoughts and feelings, his passionate love for his Master, and withal his inability to understand Him, and his self-confident arrogance. He has broken in upon Christ's solemn words, entirely deaf to their deep meaning, but blindly and blunderingly laying hold of one thought only, that Jesus is departing, and that he is to be left alone. So he asks the question, 'Lord! thither goest Thou?'—not so much caring about that, as meaning by his question—'tell me where, and then I will come too'; pledging himself to follow faithfully, as a dog behind his master, wherever He went.

Our Lord answered the underlying meaning of the words, repeating with a personal application what He had just before said as a general principle—'Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shall follow Me afterwards.' Then followed this noteworthy dialogue.

The whole significance of the incident is preserved for us in the beautiful legend which tells us how, near the city of Rome, on the Appian Way, as Peter was flying for his life, he met the Lord, and again said to Him: 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' The words of the question, as given in the Vulgate, are the name of the site of the supposed interview, and of the little church which stands on it. The Master answered: 'I go to Rome, to be crucified again.' The answer smote the heart of the Apostle, and turned the cowardly fugitive into a hero; and he followed his Lord, and went gladly to his death. For it was that death which had to be accomplished before Peter was able to follow his Lord.

Now, as to the words before us, I think we shall best gather their significance, and lay it upon our own hearts, if we simply follow the windings of the dialogue. There are three points: the audacious question, the rash vow, and the sad forecast.

I. The audacious question.

As Peter's first question, 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' meant not so much what it said, as 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; tell me, that I may'; so the second question, in like manner, is really not so much a question, 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' as the nearest possible approach to a flat contradiction of our Lord. Peter puts his words into the shape of an interrogation; what he means is, 'Yes, I can follow Thee; and in proof thereof, I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' The man's persistence, the man's love leading him to lack of reverence, came out in this (as I have ventured to call it) audacious question. Its underlying meaning was a refusal to believe the Master's word. But yet there was in it a nobility of resolution—broken afterwards, but never mind about that—to endure anything rather than to be separate from the Lord. Yet, though it was noble in its motive, but lacking in reverence in its form, there was a deeper error than that in it. Peter did not know what

'following' meant, and he had to be taught that first. One of the main reasons why he could not follow was because he did not understand what was involved. It was something more than marching behind his Master, even to a Cross. There was a deeper discipline and a more strenuous effort needed than would have availed for such a kind of following.

Let us look a little onwards into his life. Recall that scene on the morning of the day by the banks of the lake, when he waded through the shallow water, and cast himself, dripping, at his Master's feet, and, having by his threefold confession obliterated his threefold denial, was taken back to his Lord's love, and received the permission for which he had hungered, and which he had been told, in the upper room, could not 'now' be given: 'Jesus said to him, Follow thou Me.' What a flood of remembrances must then have rushed over the penitent Peter! how he must have thought to himself, 'So soon, so soon is the "canst not" changed into a *canst*! So soon has the "afterwards" come to be the present!'

And long years after that, when he was an old man, and experience had taught him what *following* meant, he shared his privilege with all the dispersed strangers to whom he wrote, and said to them, with a definite reference to this incident, and to the other after the Resurrection, 'leaving us an example, that we (not only, as I used to think, in my exuberant days of ignorance) should follow in His steps.'

So, brethren, this blundering, loving, audacious question suggests to us that to follow Jesus Christ is the supreme direction for all conduct. Men of all creeds, men of no creed, admit that. The

'Loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought,'

which is set forth in that life constitutes the living law to which all conduct is to be conformed, and will be noble in proportion as it is conformed.

There is the great blessing, and solemn obligation, and lofty prerogative of Christian morality, that for obedience to a precept it substitutes following a Person, and instead of saying to men 'Be good' it says to them 'Be Christlike.' It brings the conception of duty out of the region of abstractions into the region of living realities. For the cold statuesque ideal of perfection it substitutes a living Man, with a heart to love, and a hand to help us. Thereby the whole aspect of striving after the right is changed; for the work is made easier, and companionship comes in to aid morality, when Jesus Christ says to us, 'Be like Me; and then you will be good and blessed.' Effort will be all but as blessed as attainment, and the sense of pressing hard after Him will be only less restful than the consciousness of having attained. To follow Him is bliss, to reach Him is heaven.

But in order that this following should be possible, there must be something done that had not been done when Peter asked, 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' One reason why he could not was, as I said, because he did not know yet what 'following' meant, and because he was yet unfit for this assimilation of his character and of his conduct to the likeness of his Lord. And another reason was because the Cross still lay before the Lord, and until that death of infinite love and utter self-sacrifice for others had been accomplished, the pattern was not yet complete, nor the highest ideal of human life realised in life. Therefore the 'following' was impossible. Christ must die before He has completed the example that we

are to follow, and Christ must die before the impulse shall be given to us, which shall make us able to tread, however falteringly and far behind, in His footsteps.

The essence of His life and of His death lies in the two things, entire suppression of personal will in obedience to the will of the Father, and entire self-sacrifice for the sake of humanity. And however there is—and God forbid that I should ever forget in my preaching that there is—a uniqueness in that sacrifice, in that life, and in that death, which beggars all imitation, and needs and tolerates no repetition whilst the world lasts, still along with this, there is that which is imitable in the life and imitable in the death of the Master. To follow Jesus is to live denying self for God, and to live sacrificing self for men. Nothing less than these are included in the solemn words, 'leaving us'—even in the act and article of death when He 'suffered for us'—'an example that we should follow His steps.'

The word rendered 'example' refers to the headline which the writing-master gives his pupils to copy, line by line. We all know how clumsy the pothooks and hangers are, how blurred the page with many a blot. And yet there, at the top of it, stands the Master's fair writing, and though even the last line on the page will be blotted and blurred, when we turn it over and begin on the new leaf, the copy will be like the original, 'and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' 'Thou shalt follow Me afterwards' is a commandment; blessed be God, it is also a promise. For let us not forget that the 'following' ends in an attaining; even as the Lord Himself has said in another connection, when He spake: 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall also My servant be.' Of course, if we follow, we shall come to the same place one day. And so the great promise will be fulfilled; 'they shall follow the Lamb,' in that higher life, 'whithersoever He goeth'; and not as here imperfectly, and far behind, but close beside Him, and keeping step for step, being with Him first, and following Him afterwards.

But let us remember that with regard to that future following and its completeness, the same present incapacity applies, as clogs and mars the 'following,' which is conforming our lives to His. For, as He Himself has said to us, 'I go to prepare a place for you,' and until He had passed through death and into His glory, there was no standing-ground for human feet on the golden pavements, and heaven was inaccessible to man until Christ had died. Thus, as all life is changed when it is looked upon as being a following of Jesus, so death becomes altogether other when it is so regarded. The first martyr outside the city wall, bruised and battered by the cruel stones, remembered his Master's death, and shaped his own to be like it. As Jesus, when He died, had said: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,' Stephen, dying, said: 'Lord Jesus, receive My spirit.' As the Master had given His last breath to the prayer, 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,' so Stephen shaped his last utterance to a conformity with his Lord's, in which the difference is as significant as the likeness, and said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' And then, as the record beautifully says, amidst all that wild hubbub and cruel assault, 'he fell on sleep,' as a child on its mother's breast. Death is changed when it becomes the following of Christ.

II. We have here a rash vow.

'I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' What a strange inversion of parts is here! 'Lay down thy life for My sake'—with Calvary less than four-and-twenty hours off, when Christ laid down His life for Peter's sake. Peter was guilty of an anachronism in the words, for the time

did not come for the disciple to die for his Lord till after the Lord had died for His disciple. But he was right in feeling, though he felt it only in regard to an external and physical act, that to follow Jesus, it was necessary to be ready to die for Him. And that is the great truth which underlies and half redeems the rashness of this vow, and needs to be laid upon our hearts, if we are ever to be the true followers of the Master. Death for Christ is necessary if we are to follow Him. There is nothing that a man can do deeply and truly, in a manner worthy of a Christian, which has not underlying it, either the death of self-will and all the godless nature, or if need be the actual physical death, which is a much smaller matter. You cannot follow Christ except you die daily. No man has ever yet trodden in His footsteps except on condition of, moment by moment, slaying self, suppressing self, abjuring self, breaking the connection of self with the material world, and yielding up himself as a living sacrifice, in a living death, to the Lord of life and death. Do not think that 'following Christ' is a mere sentimental expression for so much morality as we can conveniently get into our daily life. But remember that here, with all his rashness, with all his ignorance, with all his superficiality, the Apostle has laid hold upon the great permanent, but alas! much-forgotten principle, that to die is essential to following Jesus.

This daily dying, which is a far harder thing to do than to go to a cross once, and have done with it—was impossible for Peter then, though he did not know it. His vow was a rash one, because the laying down of Christ's life, for Peter's sake and for ours, had not yet been accomplished. *There* is the motive-power by which, and by which alone, drawn in gratitude, and melted down from all our selfishness, we, too, in our measure and our turn, are able to yield ourselves, in daily crucifixion of our evil, and daily abnegation of self-trust, and self-pleasing, and self-will, to the Lord that has died for us. He must lay down His life for our sakes, and we must know He has done it, and rest upon Him as our great Sacrifice and our atoning Priest, or else we shall never be so loosed from the tyranny of self as to be ready to live by dying, and to die that we may live for His sake. 'I go to Rome to be crucified again' were the words in which the old legend braced the fugitive and made a hero of him, and sent him back to be crucified like his Lord and to offer up his physical life, as he had long since offered up his self-will and his arrogance to the Lord that had died for him.

O Lord our Father! help us, we beseech Thee, that we may be of the sheep that hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him. Strengthen our faith in that dear Lord who has laid down His life for us, that we may daily, by self-denial and self-sacrifice, lay down our lives for Him, and follow Him here in all the footsteps of His love.

A RASH VOW

'Jesus answered him, Wilt them lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice.'—JOHN xiii. 38.

In the last sermon I partly considered the dialogue of which this is the concluding portion, and found that it consisted of an audacious question: 'Why cannot I follow Thee now?' which really meant a contradiction of our Lord; of a rash vow; 'I will lay down my life for Thy sake'—and of a sad forecast: 'The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied Me thrice.' I paused in the middle of considering the second of these three stages, the rash vow. I then pointed out that, however ignorant the Apostle was of what 'following Christ' meant, he had hit the mark, and stumbled unknowingly upon the very essence of the Christian life, and an eternal truth, when he recognised that, somehow or other, to 'follow Christ' meant to die for Him. That is so, and is so always, for there is no following Christ which is not a 'dying daily,' by self-immolation and detachment from the world, and from the life of sense and self. But this rash vow has to be looked at from a somewhat different point of view, and we have to consider not only the strangely blended right and wrong, error and deep truth, that lie in its substance, but the strangely blended right and wrong in the state of feeling and thought, on the part of the Apostle, which it represents. And taking up the dropped thread, I first deal with that, and then with the sad forecast which follows.

So then, looking at these words as being like all our words, even the best of them, strangely mingled of right and wrong, good and evil, I find in them—

I. A noble, sincere, but transient emotion and impulse.

'I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' Peter meant it, every word of it; and he would have done it too, if only a gibbet or cross could have been set up then and there in the upper room. But unfortunately the moments of elevation and high-wrought enthusiasm, and the calls to martyrdom, do not always coincide. In the upper room, with its sacred atmosphere, it was easy to feel, and would have been easy to do, nobly. But it was not so easy, lying drowsily in Gethsemane, in the cold spring night, waiting for the Master's coming out from beneath the trembling shadows of the olive trees, or huddled up by the fire at the lower end of the hall in the grey morning, when vitality is at its lowest.

So the sincere, noble utterance was but the expression of impulse and emotion which lifted Peter for a moment, and did him good, but which likewise, running through him, left him dry, and all the weaker because of the gush of feeling which had foamed itself away in empty words. For let us never forget that however high, noble, or divinely inspired emotion may be, in its nature it is transient and is sure to be followed by reaction. Like the winter torrents in some parched land, the more they foam, the more speedily does the bed of them dry up again, and the more they carry down the very soil in which growth and fertility would be possible. A rush of feeling is apt to leave behind hard, insensitive rock. There is a close connection between a predominantly emotional Christianity and a very imperfect life. Feeling is apt to be a substitute for action. Is it not a very remarkable thing that the word

'benevolence,' which means 'kindly feeling,' has come to take on the meaning rightly belonging to 'beneficence,' which means 'kindly doing'? The emotional man blinds and hoodwinks himself, by thinking that his quick sensibility and lofty enthusiasm and warmth of emotion are action or as good as action. 'Be thou warmed and filled,' he says to his brother, and, in a lazy expansion of heart, forgets that he has never lifted a finger to help.

God forbid that I should seem to deprecate emotional religion or religious emotion! that is the last thing that needs to be done in this generation. If the Churches want one thing more than another, it is that their Christianity should become far more emotional than it is, and their impulses stronger, swifter, more spontaneous, more overmastering, and that they should be urged by these, and not merely by the reluctant recognition that such and such a piece of sacrifice or effort is a debt that they are obliged to clear off. Their service will be glad service, only when it is impulsive service and emotional service. Dear brethren, a Christian man whose life is not influenced by the deepest and most fervid emotion of love to the great Love that died for him, is a monster. 'The Lord's fire is in Jerusalem, and His furnace in Zion'—is that a description of the fervour of this Church, or of any Church in Christendom? A furnace? An ice-house! Think of some deserted cottage, with the roof fallen in, and in the cold chimney-place a rusty grate with some dead embers in it, and the snow lying upon the top of it—that is a truer description of a great many of our churches than 'the Lord's furnace.'

But the lesson to be taken from this incident before us is not the danger of emotion; it is rather the necessity of emotion, but with two provisoes, that it shall be emotion based upon a clear recognition of the great truth that He has laid down His life for me; and that it shall be emotion harnessed to work, and not wasted in words. The mightier the plunge of the fall, the more electrical energy you can get out of it, and set that to work to drive the wheels of life. Do not be afraid of emotion; you will make little of your Christianity unless you have it. But be sure that it is under the guidance of a clear perception of the truth that evokes it, and that it is all used to turn the wheels of life. 'Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.' Better is it that emotion should be reticent and active than that it should be voluble and idle. It is a good servant, but a bad master. A man that trusts to impulse and emotion to further his Christian course, is like a ship in that belt of variable winds that lies near the Equator, where there will be a fine ten-knot breeze for an hour or two, and then a sickly, stagnating calm. Push further south, and get into the steady 'trades,' where the wind blows with equable and persistent force all the year round in the same direction. Convert impulses and emotions into steadfast principle, warmed by emotion and borne on by impulse.

II. Again, this rash vow is an illustration of a confidence, also strangely blended of good and evil.

'I will lay down my life for Thy sake.' As I have said, Peter meant it. His words are paralleled by other words, in which two of the Lord's disciples answered His solemn question: 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?' with the unhesitating answer, 'We are able.' A great teacher has regarded that saying as one of 'the ventures of faith.' Perhaps it was. Perhaps there was as much self-confidence as faith in it. Certainly there was more self-confidence than faith in Peter's answer, and his self-confidence collapsed when the trial came.

The world and the Church hold entirely antagonistic notions about the value of self-reliance. The world says that it is a condition of power. The Church says that it is the root of weakness. Self-confidence shuts a man out from the help of God, and so shuts him out from the source of power. For if you will think for a moment, you will see that the faith which the New Testament, in conformity with all wise knowledge of one's self, preaches as the one secret of power, has for its obverse—its other side—diffidence and self-distrust. No man trusts God as God ought to be trusted, who does not distrust himself as himself ought to be distrusted. To level a mountain is the only way to carry the water across where it stood. You can, by mechanism and locks, take a canal up to the top of a hill, but you cannot take a river up to the top, and the river of God's help flows through the valley and seeks the lowest levels. Faith and self-despair are the upper and the under sides of the same thing, like some cunningly-woven cloth, the one side bearing a different pattern from the other, and yet made of the same yarn, and the same threads passing from the upper to the under sides. So faith and self-distrust are but two names for one composite whole.

I was once shown an old Jewish coin which had on the one side the words 'sackcloth and ashes,' and on the other side the words 'a crown of gold.' The coin meant to contrast what Israel had been with what Israel then was. The crown had come first; the sackcloth and ashes last. But we may use it for illustrating this point, on which I am now dwelling. Wherever, and only where, there are the sackcloth and ashes of self-despair there will be the crown of gold of an answering faith. When thus, as Wesley has it, in his great hymn: 'Confident in self-despair,' we cling to God, then we can say: 'When I am weak then am I strong,' 'Behold! we have no might, but our eyes are upon Thee.' If Peter had only said, 'By Thy help I will lay down my life for Thy sake,' his confidence would have been reasonable and blessed self-confidence, because it would have been confidence in a self inspired by divine power.

And so, brethren, whilst utter diffidence is right for us, and is the condition of all our reception of energy according to our need, the most absolute confidence—a confidence which, to the eye of the man that measures only visible things, will seem sheer insanity—is sobriety for a Christian. The world is perfectly right when it says: 'If you believe you can do a thing, you have gone a long way towards doing it.' The expectation of success has often the knack of fulfilling itself. But the world does not know our secret, and our secret is that our humble faith brings into the field the reserves with the Captain of our salvation at their head. Therefore a self-distrusting Christian can say, and say without exaggeration or presumption, 'I can do all things in Christ, strengthening me from within.'

The Church's ideals are possibilities, when you bring God into the account, and they look like insanity when you do not. Take, for instance, missions. What an absurdity to talk about a handful of Christian people—for we are only a handful as compared with the whole world—carrying their Gospel into every corner of the earth, and finding everywhere a response to it. Yes; it is absurd; but, wise Mr. Calculator, counter of heads, you have forgotten God in your estimate of whether it is reasonable or unreasonable. Again, take the Christian ideal of absolute perfection of character. 'What nonsense to talk as if any man could ever come to that.' Yes!—as if any *man* could come to that, I grant you. But if God is with him, the nonsense is to suppose that he will not come to it. Here is a row of cyphers as long as your arm. They mean nothing. Put a 1 at the left-hand end of the row; and what

does it mean then? So the faith that brings Christ into the life, and into the Church, makes 'nobodies' into mighty men—'laughs at impossibilities, and cries, It shall be done!'

Still further, here, in this rash vow, we have an underestimate of difficulties. There was another incident in the life of the Apostle, a strange replica of this one, into which he pushed himself, just as he did into the high priest's hall, partly out of curiosity and a wish to be prominent; partly out of love to his Master. Without a moment's consideration of the peril into which he was thrusting himself, he sat in the boat, and said, 'Bid me come to Thee on the water.' He forgot that He was heavy, and that water was not solid, and that the wind was high and the lake rough, and when he put his foot over the side and felt the cold waves creeping up his knees, his courage ebbed out with his faith, and he began to sink. Then he cried, 'Lord! help me!' If he had thought for a moment of the reality of the case, he would have sat still in the boat. If he had thought of what would be in his way in following Jesus to death, he would have hesitated to vow. But it is so much easier to resolve heroisms in a quiet corner than to do them when the strain comes, and it is so much easier to do some one great thing that has in it enthusiasm and nobility, and conspicuousness of sacrifice, especially if it can be got over in a moment, like having one's head cut off with an axe, than it is to 'die daily.' Ah! brethren, it is the little difficulties that make *the* difficulty. You read in the newspapers in the autumn, every now and then, of trains, in that wonderful country across the water, being stopped by caterpillars. The Christian train is stopped by an army of caterpillars, far oftener than it is by some solid and towering barrier. Our Christian lives are a great deal likelier to come to failure, because we do not take into account the multiplied small antagonisms than because we are not ready to face the greater ones. What would you think of a bridge builder, who built a bridge across some mountain torrent and made no allowance for freshets and floods when the ice melted? His bridge and his piers would be gone the first winter. You remember who it was that said that he went into the Franco-German War 'with a light heart,' and in seven weeks came Sedan and the dethronement of an Emperor, and the surrender of an army. 'Blessed is he that feareth always.' There is no more fatal error than an underestimate of our difficulties.

III. Let me say a word about the sad forecast here.

'Thou shalt deny me thrice.'

We cannot say that poor Peter's fall was at all an anomalous or uncommon thing. He did exactly what a great many of us are doing. He could—and I have no doubt he would—have gone to the death for Jesus Christ; but he could not stand being laughed at for Him. He would have been ready to meet the executioner's sharp sword, but the servant-girl's sharp tongue was more than he could bear. And so he denied Jesus, not because he was afraid of his skin—for I do not suppose that the servants had any notion of doing anything more than amusing themselves with a few clumsy gibes at his expense—but because he could not bear to be made sport of.

Now, dear brethren, I suppose we are all of us more or less movers in circles in which it sometimes is not considered 'good form' to show that we are Christian people. You young men in your warehouses, you students at the University, where it is a sign of being 'fossils' and 'behind the times' and 'not up to date' to say 'I am a Christian,' and all of us in our several places have sometimes to gather our courage together, and not be afraid to declare

whose we are. No doubt life is a better witness than words, but no doubt also life is not so good a witness as it might be, unless it sometimes has the commentary of words as well. Thus, to confess Christ means two things; to say sometimes—in the face of a smile of scorn, which is often harder to bear than something much more dangerous—'I am His,' and to live Christ, and to say by conduct 'I am His,' 'Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father, and whosoever shall deny Me, him will I also deny.' Do not button your coats over your uniform. Do not take the cockade out of your hats when you go amongst 'the other side.' Live Jesus, and, when advisable, preach Jesus.

But Peter's fall, which is typical of what we are all tempted to do, has in it a gracious message; for it proclaims the possibility of recovery from any depth of descent, and of coming back again from any distance of wandering. Did you ever notice how Peter's fall was burnt in upon his memory, so as that when he began to preach after Pentecost, the shape that his indictment of his hearers takes is, 'Ye denied the Holy One and the Just,' and how, long after—if the second Epistle which goes by his name is his—in summing up the crimes of the heretics whom he is branding, he speaks of their 'denying the Lord that bought them.' He never forgot his denial, and it remained with him as the expression for all that was wrong in a man's relation to Jesus Christ. And I suppose not only was it burnt in upon his memory, but it burnt out all his self-confidence.

It is beautiful to see how, in his letter, he speaks over and over again of 'fear' as being a wise temper of mind for a Christian. As George Herbert has it, 'A sad, wise valour is the true complexion.' Thus the man that had been so confident in himself learned to say 'Be ready to give to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.'

And do you not think that his fall drew him closer to Jesus Christ than ever he had been before, as he learned more of His pardoning love and mercy? Was he not nearer the Lord on that morning when the two together, alone, talked after the Resurrection? Was he not nearer Him when he struggled to his feet from the boat on the lake, on that morning when he was received back into his office as Christ's Apostle? Did he ever forget how he had sinned? Did he ever forget how Christ had pardoned? Did he ever forget how Christ loved and would keep him? Ah, no! The rope that is broken is strongest where it is spliced, not because it was broken, but because a cunning hand has strengthened it. We may be the stronger for our sins, not because sin strengthens, for it weakens, but because God restores. It is possible that we may build a fairer structure on the ruins of our old selves. It is possible that we may turn every field of defeat into a field of victory. It is possible that we may

'Fall to rise; be beaten, to fight better.'

If only we cling to the Lord our Strength, the promise shall be ours—whatever our failures, denials, backslidings, inconsistencies—'though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.'

FAITH IN GOD AND CHRIST

'Let not your heart be troubled ... believe in God, believe also in Me.'—JOHN xiv. 1.

The twelve were sitting in the upper chamber, stupefied with the dreary, half-understood prospect of Christ's departure. He, forgetting His own burden, turns to comfort and encourage them. These sweet and great words most singularly blend gentleness and dignity. Who can reproduce the cadence of soothing tenderness, soft as a mother's hand, in that 'Let not your heart be troubled'? And who can fail to feel the tone of majesty in that 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'?

The Greek presents an ambiguity in the latter half of the verse, for the verb may be either indicative or imperative, and so we may read four different ways, according as we render each of the two 'believes' in either of these two fashions. Our Authorised and Revised Versions concur in adopting the indicative 'Ye believe' in the former clause and the imperative in the latter. But I venture to think that we get a more true and appropriate meaning if we keep both clauses in the same mood, and read them both as imperatives: 'Believe in God, believe also in Me.' It would be harsh, I think, to take one as an affirmation and the other as a command. It would be irrelevant, I think, to remind the disciples of their belief in God. It would break the unity of the verse and destroy the relation of the latter half to the former, the former being a negative precept: 'Let not your heart be troubled'; and the latter being a positive one: 'Instead of being troubled, believe in God, and believe in Me.' So, for all these reasons, I venture to adopt the reading I have indicated.

I. Now in these words the first thing that strikes me is that Christ here points to Himself as the object of precisely the same religious trust which is to be given to God.

It is only our familiarity with these words that blinds us to their wonderfulness and their greatness. Try to hear them for the first time, and to bring into remembrance the circumstances in which they were spoken. Here is a man sitting among a handful of His friends, who is within four-and-twenty hours of a shameful death, which to all appearance was the utter annihilation of all His claims and hopes, and He says, 'Trust in God, and trust in Me'! I think that if we had heard that for the first time, we should have understood a little better than some of us do the depth of its meaning.

What is it that Christ asks for here? Or rather let me say, What is it that Christ offers to us here? For we must not look at the words as a demand or as a command, but rather as a merciful invitation to do what it is life and blessing to do. It is a very low and inadequate interpretation of these words which takes them as meaning little more than 'Believe in God, believe that He is; believe in Me, believe that I am.' But it is scarcely less so to suppose that the mere assent of the understanding to His teaching is all that Christ is asking for here. By no means; what He invites us to goes a great deal deeper than that. The essence of it is an act of the will and of the heart, not of the understanding at all. A man may believe in Him as a historical person, may accept all that is said about Him here, and yet not be within sight of the trust in Him of which He here speaks. For the essence of the whole is not the

intellectual process of assent to a proposition, but the intensely personal act of yielding up will and heart to a living person. Faith does not grasp a doctrine, but a heart. The trust which Christ requires is the bond that unites souls with Him; and the very life of it is entire committal of myself to Him in all my relations and for all my needs, and absolute utter confidence in Him as all-sufficient for everything that I can require. Let us get away from the cold intellectualism of 'belief' into the warm atmosphere of 'trust,' and we shall understand better than by many volumes what Christ here means and the sphere and the power and the blessedness of that faith which Christ requires.

Further, note that, whatever may be this believing in Him which He asks from us or invites us to render, it is precisely the same thing which He bids us render to God. The two clauses in the original bring out that idea even more vividly than in our version, because the order of the words in the latter clause is inverted; and they read literally thus: 'Believe in God, in Me also believe.' The purpose of the inversion is to put these two, God and Christ, as close together as possible; and to put the two identical emotions at the beginning and at the end, at the two extremes and outsides of the whole sentence. Could language be more deliberately adopted and moulded, even in its consecution and arrangement, to enforce this thought, that whatever it is that we give to Christ, it is the very same thing that we give to God? And so He here proposes Himself as the worthy and adequate recipient of all these emotions of confidence, submission, resignation, which make up religion in its deepest sense.

That tone is by no means singular in this place. It is the uniform tone and characteristic of our Lord's teaching. Let me remind you just in a sentence of one or two instances. What did He think of Himself who stood up before the world and, with arms outstretched, like that great white Christ in Thorwaldsen's lovely statue, said to all the troop of languid and burdened and fatigued ones crowding at His feet: 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'? That surely is a divine prerogative. What did He think of Himself who said, 'All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father'? What did He think of Himself who, in that very Sermon on the Mount (to which the advocates of a maimed and mutilated Christianity tell us they pin their faith, instead of to mystical doctrines) declared that He Himself was the Judge of humanity, and that all men should stand at His bar and receive from Him 'according to the deeds done in their body'? Upon any honest principle of interpreting these Gospels, and unless you avowedly go picking and choosing amongst His words, accepting this and rejecting that, you cannot eliminate from the scriptural representation of Jesus Christ the fact that He claimed as His own the emotions of the heart to which only God has a right and only God can satisfy.

I do not dwell upon that point, but I say, in one sentence, we have to take that into account if we would estimate the character of Jesus Christ as a Teacher and as a Man. I would not turn away from Him any imperfect conceptions, as they seem to me, of His nature and His work—rather would I foster them, and lead them on to a fuller recognition of the full Christ—but this I am bound to say, that for my part I believe that nothing but the wildest caprice, dealing with the Gospels according to one's own subjective fancies, irrespective altogether of the evidence, can strike out from the teaching of Christ this its characteristic difference. What signalises Him, and separates Him from all other religious teachers, is not the clearness or the tenderness with which He reiterated the truths about

the divine Father's love, or about morality, and justice, and truth, and goodness; but *the* peculiarity of His call to the world is, 'Believe in Me.' And if He said that, or anything like it, and if the representations of His teaching in these four Gospels, which are the only source from which we get any notion of Him at all, are to be accepted, why, then, one of two things follows. Either He was wrong, and then He was a crazy enthusiast, only acquitted of blasphemy because convicted of insanity; or else—or else—He was 'God, manifest in the flesh.' It is vain to bow down before a fancy portrait of a bit of Christ, and to exalt the humble sage of Nazareth, and to leave out the very thing that makes the difference between Him and all others, namely, these either audacious or most true claims to be the Son of God, the worthy Recipient and the adequate Object of man's religious emotions. 'Believe in God, in Me also believe.'

II. Now, secondly, notice that faith in Christ and faith in God are not two, but one.

These two clauses on the surface present juxtaposition. Looked at more closely they present interpenetration and identity. Jesus Christ does not merely set Himself up by the side of God, nor are we worshippers of two Gods when we bow before Jesus and bow before the Father; but faith in Christ is faith in God, and faith in God which is not faith in Christ is imperfect, incomplete, and will not long last. To trust in Him is to trust in the Father; to trust in the Father is to trust in Him.

What is the underlying truth that is here? How comes it that these two objects blend into one, like two figures in a stereoscope; and that the faith which flows to Jesus Christ rests upon God? This is the underlying truth, that Jesus Christ, Himself divine, is the divine Revealer of God. I need not dwell upon the latter of these two thoughts: how there is no real knowledge of the real God in the depth of His love, the tenderness of His nature or the lustrousness of His holiness; how there is no certitude; how the God that we see outside of Jesus Christ is sometimes doubt, sometimes hope, sometimes fear, always far-off and vague, an abstraction rather than a person, 'a stream of tendency' without us, that which is unnameable, and the like. I need not dwell upon the thought that Jesus Christ has showed us a Father, has brought a God to our hearts whom we can love, whom we can know really though not fully, of whom we can be sure with a certitude which is as deep as the certitude of our own personal being; that He has brought to us a God before whom we do not need to crouch far off, that He has brought to us a God whom we can trust. Very significant is it that Christianity alone puts the very heart of religion in the act of trust. Other religions put it in dread, worship, service, and the like. Jesus Christ alone says, the bond between men and God is that blessed one of trust. And He says so because He alone brings us a God whom it is not ridiculous to tell men to trust.

And, on the other hand, the truth that underlies this is not only that Jesus Christ is the Revealer of God, but that He Himself is divine. Light shines through a window, but the light and the glass that makes it visible have nothing in common with one another. The Godhead shines through Christ, but *He* is not a mere transparent medium. It is Himself that He is showing us when He is showing us God. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen'—not the light that streams through Me—but 'hath seen,' in Me, 'the Father.' And because He is Himself divine and the divine Revealer, therefore the faith that grasps Him is inseparably one with the faith that grasps God. Men could look upon a Moses, an Isaiah, or a Paul, and in them recognise the eradiation of the divinity that imparted itself through them, but the medium

was forgotten in proportion as that which it revealed was beheld. You cannot forget Christ in order to see God more clearly, but to behold Him is to behold God.

And if that be true, these two things follow. One is that all imperfect revelation of God is prophetic of, and leads up towards, the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives that truth in a very striking fashion. He compares all other means of knowing God to fragmentary syllables of a great word, of which one was given to one man and another to another. God 'spoke at sundry times and in manifold portions to the fathers by the prophets'; but the whole word is articulately uttered by the Son, in whom He has 'spoken unto us in these last times.' The imperfect revelation, by means of those who were merely mediums for the revelation leads up to Him who is Himself the Revelation, the Revealer, and the Revealed.

And in like manner, all the imperfect faith that, laying hold of other fragmentary means of knowing God, has tremulously tried to trust Him, finds its climax and consummate flower in the full-blossomed faith that lays hold upon Jesus Christ. The unconscious prophecies of heathendom; the trust that select souls up and down the world have put in One whom they dimly apprehended; the faith of the Old Testament saints; the rudimentary beginnings of a knowledge of God and of a trust in Him which are found in men to-day, and amongst us, outside of the circle of Christianity—all these things are as manifestly incomplete as a building reared half its height, and waiting for the corner-stone to be brought forth, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the intelligent and full acceptance of Him and faith in Him.

And another thing is true, that without faith in Christ such faith in God as is possible is feeble, incomplete, and will not long last. Historically a pure theism is all but impotent. There is only one example of it on a large scale in the world, and that is a kind of bastard Christianity—Mohammedanism; and we all know what good that is as a religion. There are plenty of people amongst us nowadays who claim to be very advanced thinkers, and who call themselves Theists, and not Christians. Well, I venture to say that that is a phase that will not last. There is little substance in it. The God whom men know outside of Jesus Christ is a poor, nebulous thing; an idea, not a reality. He, or rather It, is a film of cloud shaped into a vague form, through which you can see the stars. It has little power to restrain. It has less to inspire and impel. It has still less to comfort; it has least of all to satisfy the heart. You will have to get something more substantial than the far-off god of an unchristian Theism if you mean to sway the world and to satisfy men's hearts.

And so, dear brethren, I come to this—perhaps the word may be fitting for some that listen to me—'Believe in God,' and that you may, 'believe also in Christ.' For sure I am that when the stress comes, and you *want* a god, unless your god is the God revealed in Jesus Christ, he will be a powerless deity. If you have not faith in Christ, you will not long have faith in God that is vital and worth anything.

III. Lastly, this trust in Christ is the secret of a quiet heart.

It is of no use to say to men, 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' unless you finish the verse and say, 'Believe in God, believe also in Christ.' For unless we trust we shall certainly be troubled. The state of man in this world is like that of some of those sunny islands in southern seas, around which there often rave the wildest cyclones, and which carry in their

bosoms, beneath all their riotous luxuriance of verdant beauty, hidden fires, which ever and anon shake the solid earth and spread destruction. Storms without and earthquakes within—that is the condition of humanity. And where is the 'rest' to come from? All other defences are weak and poor. We have heard about 'pills against earthquakes.' That is what the comforts and tranquillising which the world supplies may fairly be likened to. Unless we trust we are, and we shall be, and should be, 'troubled.'

If we trust we may be quiet. Trust is always tranquillity. To cast a burden off myself on others' shoulders is always a rest. But trust in Jesus Christ brings infinitude on my side. Submission is repose. When we cease to kick against the pricks they cease to prick and wound us. Trust opens the heart, like the windows of the Ark tossing upon the black and fatal flood, for the entrance of the peaceful dove with the olive branch in its mouth. Trust brings Christ to my side in all His tenderness and greatness and sweetness. If I trust, 'all is right that seems most wrong.' If I trust, conscience is quiet. If I trust, life becomes 'a solemn scorn of ills.' If I trust, inward unrest is changed into tranquillity, and mad passions are cast out from him that sits 'clothed and in his right mind' at the feet of Jesus.

'The wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest.' But if I trust, my soul will become like the glassy ocean when all the storms sleep, and 'birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave.' 'Peace I leave with you.' 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.'

Help us, O Lord! to yield our hearts to Thy dear Son, and in Him to find Thyself and eternal rest.

'MANY MANSIONS'

'In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.'—JOHN xiv. 2.

Sorrow needs simple words for its consolation; and simple words are the best clothing for the largest truths. These eleven poor men were crushed and desolate at the thought of Christ's going; they fancied that if He left them they lost Him. And so, in simple, childlike words, which the weakest could grasp, and in which the most troubled could find peace, He said to them, after having encouraged their trust in Him, 'There is plenty of room for you as well as for Me where I am going; and the frankness of our intercourse in the past might make you sure that if I were going to leave you I would have told you all about it. Did I ever hide from you anything that was painful? Did I ever allure you to follow Me by false promises? Should I have kept silence about it if our separation was to be eternal?' So, simply, as a mother might hush her babe upon her breast, He soothes their sorrow. And yet, in the quiet words, so level to the lowest apprehension, there lie great truths, far deeper than we yet have appreciated, and which will enfold themselves in their majesty and their greatness through eternity. 'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.'

I. Now note in these words, first, the 'Father's house,' and its ample room.

There is only one other occasion recorded in which our Lord used this expression, and it occurs in this same Gospel near the beginning; where in the narrative of the first cleansing of the Temple we read that He said, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.' The earlier use of the words may help to throw light upon one aspect of this latter employment of it, for there blend in the image the two ideas of what I may call domestic familiarity, and of that great future as being the reality of which the earthly Temple was intended to be the dim prophecy and shadow. Its courts, its many chambers, its ample porches with room for thronging worshippers, represented in some poor way the wide sweep and space of that higher house; and the sense of Sonship, which drew the Boy to His Father's house in the earliest hours of conscious childhood, speaks here.

Think for a moment of how sweet and familiar the conception of heaven as the Father's house makes it to us. There is something awful, even to the best and holiest souls, in the thought of even the glories beyond. The circumstances of death, which is its portal, our utter unacquaintance with all that lies behind the veil, the terrible silence and distance which falls upon our dearest ones as they are sucked into the cloud, all tend to make us feel that there is much that is solemn and awful even in the thought of eternal future blessedness. But how it is all softened when we say, 'My Father's house.' Most of us have long since left behind us the sweet security, the sense of the absence of all responsibility, the assurance of defence and provision, which used to be ours when we lived as children in a father's house here. But we may all look forward to the renewal, in far nobler form, of these early days, when the father's house meant the inexpugnable fortress where no evil

could befall us, the abundant home where all wants were supplied, and where the shyest and timidest child could feel at ease and secure. It is all coming again, brother, and amidst the august and unimaginable glories of that future the old feeling of being little children, nestling safe in the Father's house, will fill our quiet hearts once more.

And then consider how the conception of that Future as the Father's house suggests answers to so many of our questions about the relationship of the inmates to one another. Are they to dwell isolated in their several mansions? Is that the way in which children in a home dwell with each other? Surely if He be the Father, and heaven be His house, the relation of the redeemed to one another must have in it more than all the sweet familiarity and unrestrained frankness which subsists in the families of earth. A solitary heaven would be but half a heaven, and would ill correspond with the hopes that inevitably spring from the representation of it as 'my Father's house.'

But consider further that this great and tender name for heaven has its deepest meaning in the conception of it as a spiritual state of which the essential elements are the loving manifestation and presence of God as Father, the perfect consciousness of sonship, the happy union of all the children in one great family, and the derivation of all their blessedness from their Elder Brother.

The earthly Temple, to which there is some allusion in this great metaphor, was the place in which the divine glory was manifested to seeking souls, though in symbol, yet also in reality, and the representation of our text blends the two ideas of the free, frank intercourse of the home and of the magnificent revelations of the Holy of holies. Under either aspect of the phrase, whether we think of 'my Father's house' as temple or as home, it sets before us, as the main blessedness and glory of heaven, the vision of the Father, the consciousness of sonship, and the complete union with Him. There are many subsidiary and more outward blessednesses and glories which shine dimly through the haze of metaphors and negations, by which alone a state of which we have no experience can be revealed to us; but these are secondary. The heaven of heaven is the possession of God the Father through the Son in the expanding spirits of His sons. The sovereign and filial position which Jesus Christ in His manhood occupies in that higher house, and which He shares with all those who by Him have received the adoption of sons, is the very heart and nerve of this great metaphor.

But I think we must go a step further than that, and recognise that in the image there is inherent the teaching that that glorious future is not merely a state, but also a place. Local associations are not to be divorced from the words; and although we can say but little about such a matter, yet everything in the teaching of Scripture points to the thought that howsoever true it may be that the essence of heaven is condition, yet that also heaven has a local habitation, and is a place in the great universe of God. Jesus Christ has at this moment a human body, glorified. That body, as Scripture teaches us, is somewhere, and where He is there shall also His servant be. In the context He goes on to tell us that 'He goes to prepare a place for us,' and though I would not insist upon the literal interpretation of such words, yet distinctly the drift of the representation is in the direction of localising, though not of materialising, the abode of the blessed. So I think we can say, not merely that *what* He is that shall also His servants be, but that *where* He is there shall also His servants be. And from the representation of my text, though we cannot fathom all its depths, we can at least

grasp this, which gives solidity and reality to our contemplations of the future, that heaven is a place, full of all sweet security and homelike repose, where God is made known in every heart and to every consciousness as a loving Father, and of which all the inhabitants are knit together in the frankest fraternal intercourse, conscious of the Father's love, and rejoicing in the abundant provisions of His royal House.

And then there is a second thought to be suggested from these words, and that is of the ample room in this great house. The original purpose of the words of my text, as I have already reminded you, was simply to soothe the fears of a handful of disciples.

There was room where Christ went for eleven poor men. Yes, room enough for them! but Christ's prescient eye looked down the ages, and saw all the unborn millions that would yet be drawn to Him uplifted on the Cross, and some glow of satisfaction flitted across His sorrow, as He saw from afar the result of the impending travail of His soul in the multitudes by whom God's heavenly house should yet be filled. 'Many mansions!' the thought widens out far beyond our grasp. Perhaps that upper room, like most of the roof-chambers in Jewish houses, was open to the skies, and whilst He spoke, the innumerable lights that blaze in that clear heaven shone down upon them, and He may have pointed to these. The better Abraham perhaps looked forth, like His prototype, on the starry heavens, and saw in the vision of the future those who through Him should receive the 'adoption of sons' and dwell for ever in the house of the Lord, 'so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.'

Ah! brethren, if we could only widen our measurement of the walls of the New Jerusalem to the measurement of that 'golden rod which the man, that is the angel,' as John says, applied to it, we should understand how much bigger it is than any of these poor sects and communities of ours here on earth. If we would lay to heart, as we ought to do, the deep meaning of that indefinite 'many' in my text, it would rebuke our narrowness. There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth—the most Catholic of them—will be very much surprised to see there, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so-called Christians here on earth.

That one word 'many' should deepen our confidence in the triumphs of Christ's Cross, and it may be used to heighten our own confidence as to our own poor selves. A chamber in the great Temple waits for each of us, and the question is, Shall we occupy it, or shall we not? The old Rabbis had a tradition which, like a great many of their apparently foolish sayings, covers in picturesque guise a very deep truth. They said that, however many the throngs of worshippers who came up to Jerusalem at the passover, the streets of the city and the courts of the sanctuary were never crowded. And so it is with that great city. There is room for all. There are throngs, but no crowds. Each finds a place in the ample sweep of the Father's house, like some of the great palaces that barbaric Eastern kings used to build, in whose courts armies might encamp, and the chambers of which were counted by the thousand. And surely in all that ample accommodation, you and I may find some corner where we, if we will, may lodge for evermore.

I do not dwell upon subsidiary ideas that may be drawn from the expressions. 'Mansions' means places of permanent abode, and suggests the two thoughts, so sweet to travellers

and toilers in this fleeting, labouring life, of unchangeableness and of repose. Some have supposed that the variety in the attainments of the redeemed, which is reasonable and scriptural, might be deduced from our text, but that does not seem to be relevant to our Lord's purpose.

One other suggestion may be made without enlarging upon it. There is only one other occasion in this Gospel in which the word here translated 'mansions' is employed, and it is this: 'We will come and make our abode with him.' Our mansion is in God; God's dwelling-place is in us. So ask yourselves, Have you a place in that heavenly home? When prodigal children go away from the father's house, sometimes a broken-hearted parent will keep the boy's room just as it used to be when he was young and pure, and will hope and weary through long days for him to come back and occupy it again. God is keeping a room for you in His house; do you see that you fill it.

II. In the next place, note here the sufficiency of Christ's revelation for our needs.

'If it were not so I would have told you.' He sets Himself forward in very august fashion as being the Revealer and Opener of that house for us. There is a singular tone about all our Lord's few references to the future—a tone of decisiveness; not as if He were speaking, as a man might do, that which he had thought out, or which had come to him, but as if He was speaking of what he had Himself beheld, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.' He stands like one on a mountain top, looking down into the valleys beyond, and telling His comrades in the plain behind Him what He sees. He speaks of that unseen world always as One who had been in it, and who was reporting experiences, and not giving forth opinions. His knowledge was the knowledge of One who dwelt with the Father, and left the house in order to find and bring back His wandering brethren. It was 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity,' and therefore He could tell us with decisiveness, with simplicity, with assurance, all which we need to know about the geography of that unknown land—the plan of that, by us unvisited, house. Very remarkable, therefore, is it, that with this tone there should be such reticence in Christ's references to the future. The text implies the *rationale* of such reticence. 'If it were not so I would have told you.' I tell you all that you need, though I tell you a great deal less than you sometimes wish.

The gaps in our knowledge of the future, seeing that we have such a Revealer as we have in Christ, are remarkable. But my text suggests this to us—we have as much as we need. *I* know, and many of *you* know, by bitter experience, how many questions, the answers to which would seem to us to be such a lightening of our burdens, our desolated and troubled hearts suggest about that future, and how vainly we ply heaven with questions and interrogate the unreplying Oracle. But we know as much as we need. We know that God is there. We know that it is the Father's house. We know that Christ is in it. We know that the dwellers there are a family. We know that sweet security and ample provision are there; and, for the rest, if we I needed to have heard more, He would have told us.

'My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all;
And I shall be with Him.'

Let the gaps remain. The gaps are part of the revelation, and we know enough for faith and hope.

May we not widen the application of that thought to other matters than to our bounded and fragmentary conceptions of a future life? In times like the present, of doubt and unrest, it is a great piece of Christian wisdom to recognise the limitations of our knowledge and the sufficiency of the fragments that we have. What do we get a revelation for? To solve theological puzzles and dogmatic difficulties? to inflate us with the pride of *quasi*-omniscience? or to present to us God in Christ for faith, for love, for obedience, for imitation? Surely the latter, and for such purposes we have enough.

So let us recognise that our knowledge is very partial. A great stretch of wall is blank, and there is not a window in it. If there had been need for one, it would have been struck out. He has been pleased to leave many things obscure, not arbitrarily, so as to try our faith—for the implication of the words before us is that the relation between Him and us binds Him to the utmost possible frankness, and that all which we need and He can tell us He does tell—but for high reasons, and because of the very conditions of our present environment, which forbid the more complete and all-round knowledge.

So let us recognise our limitations. We know in part, and we are wise if we affirm in part. Hold by the Central Light, which is Jesus Christ. 'Many things did Jesus which are not written in this book,' and many gaps and deficiencies from a human point of view exist in the contexture of revelation. 'But these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ,' for which enough has been told us, 'and that, believing, ye may have life in His name.' If that purpose be accomplished in us, God will not have spoken, nor we have heard, in vain. Let us hold by the Central Light, and then the circumference of darkness will gradually retreat, and a wider sphere of illumination be ours, until the day when we enter our mansion in the Father's house, and then 'in Thy Light shall we see light'; and we shall 'know even as we are known.'

Let your Elder Brother lead you back, dear friend, to the Father's bosom, and be sure that if you trust Him and listen to Him, you will know enough on earth to turn earth into a foretaste of Heaven, and will find at last your place in the Father's house beside the Brother who has prepared it for you.

THE FORERUNNER

'... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'—JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

What divine simplicity and depth are in these words! They carry us up into the unseen world, and beyond time; and yet a little child can lay hold on them, and mourning hearts and dying men find peace and sweetness in them. A very familiar image underlies them. It was customary for travellers in those old days to send some of their party on in advance, to find lodging and make arrangements for them in some great city. Many a time one or other of the disciples had been 'sent before His face into every place where He Himself should come.' On that very morning two of them had gone in, at His bidding, from Bethany to make ready the table at which they were sitting. Christ here takes that office upon Himself. The emblem is homely, the thing meant is transcendent.

Not less wonderful is the blending of majesty and lowliness. The office which He takes upon Himself is that of an inferior and a servant. And yet the discharge of it, in the present case, implies His authority over every corner of the universe, His immortal life, and the sufficiency of His presence to make a heaven. Nor can we fail to notice the blending of another pair of opposites: His certainty of His impending death, and His certainty, notwithstanding and thereby, of His continual work and His final return, are inseparably interlaced here. How comes it that, in all His premonitions of His death, Jesus Christ never spoke about it as failure or as the interruption or end of His activity, but always as the transition to, and the condition of, His wider work? 'I go, and if I go I return, and take you to Myself.'

So, then, there are three things here, the departure with its purpose, the return, and the perfected union.

I. The Departure.

Our Lord's going away from that little group was a journey in two stages. Calvary was the first; Olivet was the second. He means by the phrase the whole continuous process which begins with His death and ends in His ascension. Both are embraced in His words, and each co-operates to the attainment of the great purpose.

He prepares a place for us by His death. The High Priest, in the ancient ritual, once a year was privileged to lift the heavy veil and pass into the darkened chamber, where only the light between the cherubim was visible, because he bore in his hand the blood of the sacrifice. But in our New Testament system the path into 'the holiest of all,' the realisation of the most intimate fellowship with heavenly things and communion with God Himself, are made possible, and the way patent for every foot, because Jesus has died. And as the communion upon earth, so the perfecting of the communion in the heavens. Who of us could step within those awful sanctities, or stand serene amidst the region of eternal light and stainless purity, unless, in His death, He had borne the sins of the world, and, having

'overcome' its 'sharpness' by enduring its blow, had 'opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers'?

Old legends tell us of magic gates that resisted all attempts to force them, but upon which, if one drop of a certain blood fell, they flew open. And so, by His death, Christ has opened the gates and made the heaven of perfect purity a dwelling-place for sinful men.

But the second stage of His departure is that which more eminently is in Christ's mind here. He prepares a place for us by His entrance into and His dwelling in the heavenly places. The words are obscure because we have but few others with which to compare them, and no experience by which to interpret them. We know so little about the matter that it is not wise to say much; but though there be vast tracts of darkness round the little spot of light, this should only make the spot of light more vivid and more precious. We know little, but we know enough for mind and heart to rest upon. Our ignorance of the ways in which Christ by His ascension prepares a heaven for His followers should neither breed doubt nor disregard of His assurance that He does.

If Christ had not ascended, would there have been 'a place' at all? He has gone with a human body, which, glorified as it is, still has relations to space, and must be somewhere. And we may even say that His ascending up on high has made a place where His servants are. But apart from that suggestion, which, perhaps, is going beyond our limits, we may see that Christ's presence in heaven is needful to make it a heaven for poor human souls. There, as here (Scripture assures us), and throughout eternity as to-day, Jesus Christ is the Mediator of all human knowledge and possession of God. It is from Him and through Him that there come to men, whether they be men on earth or men in the heavens, all that they know, all that they hope, all that they enjoy, of the wisdom, love, beauty, peace, power, which flow from God. Take away from the heaven of the Christian expectation that which comes to the spirit through Jesus Christ, and you have nothing left. He and His mediation and ministration alone make the brightness and the blessedness of that high state. The very glories of all that lies beyond the veil would have an aspect appalling and bewildering to us, unless our Brother were there. Like some poor savages brought into a great city, or rustics into the presence of a king and his court, we should be ill at ease amidst the glories and solemnities of that future life unless we saw standing there our Kinsman, to whom we can turn, and who makes it possible for us to feel that it is home. Christ's presence makes heaven the home of our hearts.

Not only did He go to prepare a place, but He is continuously preparing it for us all through the ages. We have to think of a double form of the work of Christ, His past work in His earthly life, and His present in His exaltation. We have to think of a double form of His present activity—His work with and in us here on earth, and His work for us there in the heavens. We have to think of a double form of His work in the heavens—that which the Scripture represents in a metaphor, the full comprehension of which surpasses our present powers and experiences, as being His priestly intercession; and that which my text represents in a metaphor, perhaps a little more level to our apprehension, as being His preparing a place for us. Behind the veil there is a working Christ, who, in the heavens, is preparing a place for all that love Him.

II. In the next place, note the Return.

The purpose of our Lord's departure, as set forth by Himself here, guarantees for us His coming back again. That is the force of the simple argumentation of my text, and of the pathetic and soothing repetition of the sweet words, 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself.' Because the departure had for its purpose the preparing of the place, therefore it is necessarily followed by a return. He who went away as the Forerunner has not done His work until He comes back, and, as Guide, leads those for whom He had prepared the place to the place which He had prepared for them.

Now that return of our Lord, like His departure, may be considered as having two stages. Unquestionably the main meaning and application of the words is to that final and personal coming which stands at the end of history, and to which the hopes of every Christian soul ought to be steadfastly directed. He will 'so come in like manner as' He has gone. We are not to water down such words as these into anything short of a return precisely corresponding in its method to the departure; and as the departure was visible, corporeal, literal, personal, and local, so the return is to be visible, corporeal, literal, personal, local too. He is to come as He went, a visible Manhood, only throned amongst the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This is the aim that He sets before Him in His departure. He leaves in order that He may come back again.

And, oh, dear friends! remember—and let us live in the strength of the remembrance—that this return ought to be the prominent subject of Christian aspiration and desire. There is much about the conception of that solemn return, with all the convulsions that attend it, and the judgment of which it is preliminary, that may well make men's hearts chill within them. But for you and me, if we have any love in our hearts and loyalty in our spirits to that King, 'His coming' should be 'prepared as the *morning*,' and we should join in the great burst of rapture of many a psalm, which calls upon rocks and hills to break forth into singing, and trees of the field to clap their hands, because He cometh as the King to judge the earth. His own parable tells us how we ought to regard His coming. When the fig-tree's branch begins to supple, and the little leaves to push their way through the polished stem, then we know that summer is at hand. His coming should be as the approach of that glorious, fervid time, in which the sunshine has tenfold brilliancy and power, the time of ripened harvests and matured fruits, the time of joy for all creatures that love the sun. It should be the glad hope of all His servants.

We have a double witness to bear in the midst of this as of every generation. One half of the witness stretches backwards to the Cross, and proclaims 'Christ has come'; the other reaches onwards to the Throne, and proclaims 'Christ will come.' Between these two high uplifted piers swings the chain of the world's history, which closes with the return, to judge and to save, of the Lord who came to die and has gone to prepare a place for us.

But do not let us forget that we may well take another point of view than this. Scripture knows of many comings of the Lord preliminary to, and in principle one with, His last coming. For nations all great crises of their history are 'comings of the Lord,' the Judge, and we are strictly in the line of Scripture analogy when, in reference to individuals, we see in each single death a true coming of the Lord.

That is the point of view in which we ought to look upon a Christian's death-bed. 'The Master *is come*, and calleth for thee.' Beyond all secondary causes, deeper than disease or accident, lies the loving will of Him who is the Lord of life and of death. Death is Christ's minister, 'mighty and beauteous, though his face be dark,' and he, too, stands amidst the ranks of the 'ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation.' It is Christ that says of one, 'I will that this man tarry,' and to another, 'Go!' and he goeth. But whensoever a Christian man lies down to die, Christ says, 'Come!' and he comes. How that thought should hallow the death-chamber as with the print of the Master's feet! How it should quiet our hearts and dry our tears! How it should change the whole aspect of that 'shadow feared of man'! With Him for our companion, the lonely road will not be dreary; and though in its anticipation, our timid hearts may often be ready to say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,' if we have Him by our sides, 'even the night shall be light about us.' The dying martyr beneath the city wall lifted up his face to the heavens, and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!' It was the echo of the Master's promise, 'I will come again, and receive you to Myself.'

III. Lastly, notice the Perfected Union.

The departure for such a purpose necessarily involved the return again. Both are stages in the process, which is perfected by complete union—'That where I am there ye may be also.'

Christ, as I have been saying, is Heaven. His presence is all that we need for peace, for joy, for purity, for rest, for love, for growth. To be 'with Him,' as He tells us in another part of these wonderful last words in the upper chamber, is to 'behold His glory.' And to behold His glory, as John tells us in his Epistle, is to be like Him. So Christ's presence means the communication to us of all the lustre of His radiance, of all the whiteness of His purity, of all the depth of His blessedness, and of a share in His wondrous dominion. His glorified manhood will pass into ours, and they that are with Him where He is will rest as in the centre and home of their spirits, and find Him all-sufficient. His presence is my Heaven.

That is almost all we know. Oh! it is more than all we need to know. The curtain is the picture. It is because what is there transcends in glory all our present experience that Scripture can only hint at it and describe it by negations—such as 'no night,' 'no sorrow,' 'no tears,' 'former things passed away'; and by symbols of glory and lustre gathered from all that is loftiest and noblest in human buildings and society. But all these are but secondary and poor. The living heart of the hope, and the lambent centre of the brightness, is, 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.'

And it is enough. It is enough to make the bond of union between us in the outer court and them in the holy place. Parted friends will fix to look at the same star at the same moment of the night and feel some union; and if we from amidst the clouds of earth, and they from amidst the pure radiance of their heaven, turn our eyes to the same Christ, we are not far apart. If He be the companion of each of us, He reaches a hand to each, and, clasping it, the parted ones are united; and 'whether we wake or sleep we live *together*,' because we both live with Him.

Brother! Is Jesus Christ so much to you that a heaven which consists in nearness and likeness to Him has any attraction for you? Let Him be your Saviour, your Sacrifice, your

Helper, your Companion. Obey Him as your King, love Him as your Friend, trust Him as your All. And be sure that then the darkness will be but the shadow of His hand, and instead of dreading death as that which separates you from life and love and action and joy, you will be able to meet it peacefully, as that which rends the thin veil, and unites you with Him who is the Heaven of heavens.

He has gone to prepare a place for us. And if we will let Him, He will prepare us for the place, and then come and lead us thither. 'Thou wilt show me the path of life' which leads through death. 'In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

THE WAY

'And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.'—JOHN xiv. 4-7.

Our Lord has been speaking of His departure, of its purpose, of His return as guaranteed by that purpose, and of His servants' eternal and perfect reunion with Him. But even these cheering and calming thoughts do not exhaust His consolations, as they did not satisfy all the disciples' needs. They might still have said, 'Yes; we believe that You will come back again, and we believe that we shall be together; but what about the parenthesis of absence?' And here is the answer, or at least part of it: 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know'; or, if we adopt the shortened form which the Revised Version gives us, 'Whither I go ye know the way.'

When you say to a man, 'You know the way,' you mean 'Come.' And in these words there lie, as it seems to me, a veiled invitation to the disciples to come to Him before He came back for them, and the assurance that they, though separated, might still find and tread the road to the Father's house, and so be with Him still. They are not left desolate. The Christ who is absent is present as the path to Himself. And so the parenthesis is bridged across. Now in these verses we have several large and important lessons which I think may best be drawn by simply seeking to follow their course.

I. Observe the disciples' unconscious knowledge.

Jesus Christ says: 'Ye know the way and ye know the goal.' One of them ventures flatly to contradict Him, and to traverse both assertions with a brusque and thorough-going negative. 'We do *not* know whither Thou goest,' says Thomas; 'how can we know the way?' He is the same man in this conversation that we find him in the interview before our Lord's journey to raise Lazarus, and in the interview after our Lord's resurrection. In all three cases he appears as mainly under the dominion of sense, as slow to apprehend anything beyond its limits, as morbidly melancholy and disposed to take the blackest possible view of things—a practical pessimist—and yet with a certain kind of frank outspokenness which half redeems the other characteristics from blame. He could not understand all the Lord's deep words just spoken. His mind was befogged and dimmed, and he blurts out his ignorance, knowing that the best place to carry it to is to the Illuminator who can make it light.

'We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?' Was Jesus right? was Thomas right? or were they both right? The fact is that Thomas and all his fellows knew, after a fashion, but they did not know that they knew. They had heard much in the past as to where Christ was going. Plainly enough it had been rung in their ears over and over again. It had made some kind of lodgment in their heads, and, in that sense, they did know.

It is this unused and unconscious knowledge of theirs to which Christ appeals, and which He tries to draw out into consciousness and power when He says, 'You know whither I am going, and you know the road.' Is not that exactly what a patient teacher will do with some flustered child when he says to it: 'Take time! You know it well enough if you will only think'? So the Master says here: 'Do not be agitated and troubled in heart. Reflect, remember, overhaul your stores, and think what I have told you over and over again, and you will find that you *do* know whither I am going, and that you *do* know the way.'

The patient gentleness of the Master with the slowness of the scholars is beautifully exemplified here, as is also the method, which He lovingly and patiently adopts, of sending men back to consult their own consciousness as illuminated by His teaching, and to see whether there is not lying somewhere, unrecked of and unemployed in some dusty corner of their mind, a truth that only needs to be dragged out and cleaned in order to show itself for what it is, the all-sufficient light and strength for the moment's need.

The dialogue is an instance of what is true about us all, that we have in our possession truths given to us by Jesus Christ, the whole sweep and bearing of which, the whole majesty and power and illuminating capacity of which, we do not dream of yet. How much in our creeds lies dim and undeveloped! Time and circumstances and some sore agony of spirit are needed in order to make us realise the riches that we possess, and the certitudes to which our troubled spirits may cling; and the practice of far more patient, honest, profound meditation and reflection than finds favour with the average Christian man is needed, too, in order that the truths possessed may be possessed, and that we may know what we know, and understand 'the things that are given to us of God.'

In all your creeds, there are large tracts that you, in some kind of a fashion, do believe; and yet they have no vitality in your consciousness nor power in your lives. And the Master here does with these disciples exactly what He is trying to do day by day with us, namely, fling us back on ourselves, or rather upon His revelation in us, and get us to fathom its depths and to walk round about its magnitudes, and so to understand the things that we say we believe.

All our knowledge is ignorance. Ignorance that confesses itself to Him is in the way of becoming knowledge. His light will touch the smoke and change it into red spires of flame. If you do not know, go to Him and say, 'Lord! I do not.' An accurate understanding of where the darkness lies is the first step to the light. We are meant to carry all our inadequate and superficial realisations of His truth into His presence, that, from Him, we may gain deeper knowledge, a firmer faith, and a more joyous certitude in His inexhaustible lessons. In every article and item of the Christian faith there is a transcendent element which surpasses our present comprehension. Let us be confident that the light will break; and let us welcome the new illumination when it comes, sure that it comes from God. Be not puffed up with the conceit that you know all. Be sure of this, that, according to the good old metaphor, we are but as children on the shore of the great ocean, gathering a few of the shells that it has washed to our feet, itself stretching boundless, and, thank God, sunlit, before us. 'Ye know the way.' 'Master, we know not the way.'

II. Observe here, in the second place, our Lord's great self-revelation which meets this unconscious knowledge.

'Jesus saith unto him: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' Now it is quite plain, I think, from the whole strain of the context and the purpose of these words that the main idea in them is the first—'I am the Way.' And that is made more certain because of the last words of the verse, which, summing up the force of the three preceding assertions, dwell only upon the metaphor of the Way; 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' So that of these three great words, the Way, the Truth, the Life, we are to regard the second and the third as explanatory of the first. They are not co-ordinate, but the first is the more general, and the other two show how the first comes to be true. 'I am the Way' because 'I am the Truth and the Life.'

There are no words of the Master, perhaps, to which my previous remarks are more necessary to be applied than these. We know; and yet oh! what an overplus of glory and of depth is here that we do not know and never can know. The most fragmentary and inadequate grasp of them with heart and mind will bring light to the mind and quietness and peace to the heart; but the whole meaning of them goes beyond men and angels. We can only skim the surface and seek to shift back the boundaries of our knowledge a little further, and to embrace within its limits a little more of the broad land into which the words bring us. So just take a thought or two which may tend in that direction.

Note, then, as belonging to all three of these clauses that remarkable '*I am*.' We show a way, Christ *is* it. We speak truth, Christ *is* it. Parents impart life, which they have received, Christ *is* Life. He separates Himself from all men by that representation that He is not merely the communicator or the teacher or the guide, but that He Himself is, in His own personal Being, Way, Truth, Life. He said that, when Calvary was within arm's-length. What did He think about Himself, and what should we think of Him?

And then note, further, that He sets forth His unique relation to the truth as being one ground on which He is the Way to God. He *is* the Truth in reference to the divine nature. That Truth, then, is not a mere matter of words. It is not only His speech that teaches us, but Himself that shows us God. His whole life and character, His personality, are the true representation within human conditions of the Invisible God; and when He says, 'I am the Way and the Truth,' He is saying substantially the same thing as the great prologue of this Gospel says when it calls Him the Word and the Light of men, and as Paul says when he names Him 'the Image of the Invisible God.' There is all the difference between talking about God and showing Him. Men reveal God by their words; Christ reveals Him by Himself and the facts of His life. The truest and highest representation of the divine nature that men can ever have is in the face of Jesus Christ.

I need only remind you in a sentence about other and lower applications of this great saying, which do not, as I think, enter into the purpose of the context. He is the Truth, inasmuch as, in the life and historical manifestation of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures, men find foundation truths of a moral and spiritual sort. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,' He is these, and all true ethics is but the formulating into principles of all the facts of the life and character of Jesus Christ.

Further, my text says He is the Way because He is the Life. On the one side God is brought to all hearts, and in some real sense to our comprehension, by the life of Jesus Christ, and so

He is the Way. But that is not enough. There must be an action upon us as well as an action having reference to the divine nature. God is brought to men by the manifestation in Christ; and we, the dead, are quickened by the communication of the Life. The one phrase points to all His work as a Revealer, the other points to all His work upon us as life-giving Spirit, a Quickener and an Inspirer. Dead men cannot walk a road. It is of no use to make a path if it starts from a cemetery. Christ taught that men apart from Him are dead, and that the only life that they can have by which they can be knit to God is the divine life which was in Himself, and of which He is the source and the principle for the whole world. He does not tell us here what yet is true, and what He abundantly tells in other parts of this great conversation, that the only way by which the life which He brings can be diffused and communicated is by His death. 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.' He is the Life, and—paradox of mystery and yet fact which is the very heart and centre of His Gospel—His only way of giving His life to us is by giving up His physical life for us. He must die that He may be the life-spring for the world. The alabaster box must be broken if the ointment and its fragrance are to be poured out; and 'death is the gate of life' in a deeper than the ordinary sense of the saying, inasmuch as the death of the Life which is Christ is the life of the death which we are.

And so, because, on the one hand, He brings a God to our hearts that we can love and trust, and because, on the other, He communicates to our spirits, dead in the only true death which is the separation from God by sin, the life by which we are knit to God, He is the Way to the Father.

And what about people that never heard of Him, to whom that Way has been closed, to whom that Truth has never been manifested, to whom that Life has never been brought? Ah! Christ has other ways of working than through His historical manifestation, for there is no truth more plainly taught in this great fourth Gospel than this, that that Light 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The eternal Word works through all the earth, in ways beyond our ken, and wherever any man has, however imperfectly, felt after and grasped the thought of a Father in the heavens, there the Word, which is the Light of men, has wrought.

But for us to whom this Book has come, for what people call in bitter irony 'Christendom,' the law of my text rigidly applies, and it is being worked out all round us to-day. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' And here we are, in this England of ours, and in our sister nations on the continent of Europe and in America, face to face as I believe with this alternative—either Jesus Christ the Revealer of God and the Life of men, or an empty Heaven. And for you, individually, it is either—take Christ for the Way, or wander in the wilderness and forget your Father. It is either—take Christ for the Truth, or be given over to the insufficiencies of mere natural, political, and intellectual truths, and the shows and illusions of time and sense. It is either—take Christ for your Life, or remain in your deadness, separate from God.

III. Lastly, we have here the disciples' ignorance and the new vision which dispels it.

'If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also, and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.' Our Lord accepts for the moment Thomas's standpoint. He supplements His former allegation of the disciples' knowledge with the admission of the

ignorance which went with it as its shadow, and was only too sadly and plainly shown by their failure to discern in Him the manifestation of the Father. He has just told them that they did know what they thought they knew not; He now tells them that they did not know what they thought they knew so well, after so many years of companionship—even Himself. The proof that they did not is that they did not know the Father as revealed in Him, nor Him as revealing the Father. If they missed that, they missed everything; and for all they had known of His graciousness, were strangers to His truest Self. Their ignorance would turn out knowledge, if they would think, and their supposed knowledge would turn out ignorance.

The lesson for us is that the true test of the completeness and worth of our knowledge of Christ lies in its being knowledge of God the Father, brought near to us by Him. This saying puts a finger on the radical deficiency of all merely humanitarian views of Christ's person, however clearly they may see and admiringly extol the beauty of His character and the 'sweet reasonableness' of His wisdom. They all break down here, and are arraigned as so shallow and incomplete that they do not deserve to be called knowledge of Him at all. If you know anything about Jesus Christ rightly, this is what you know about Him, that in Him you see God. If you have not seen God in Him, you have not got to the heart of the mystery. The knowledge of Christ which stops with the Man and the Martyr, and the Teacher and the beautiful, gentle Brother, is knowledge so partial that even He cannot venture to call it other than ignorance. Oh! brethren, do our conceptions of Him meet this test which He Himself has laid down, and can we say that, seeing Him, we see in Him God?

And then our Lord passes on to another thought, the new vision which at the moment was being granted to this unconscious ignorance that was passing into conscious knowledge. 'From henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.' We must give that 'from henceforth,' as a note of time, a somewhat liberal interpretation, and apply it to the whole series of utterances and deeds of which the words of our text are but a portion. And, if so, we come to this—it was in the wisdom, and the gentleness, and the deep truths of that upper chamber; it was in the agony and submission of Gethsemane; it was in the meek patience before the judges, and the silent acceptance of ignominy and shame; it was in the willing, loving endurance of the long hours upon the Cross, that Christ inaugurated the new stage in His revelation of God and in His life-giving to the world. And it is from thenceforth and thereby that in the man Jesus, men know and see 'the Father' as they never did before. The Cross and the Passion of Christ are the unveiling to the world of the heart of God; and by the side of that new vision the fairest and the loftiest and the sweetest of Christ's former manifestations and utterances sink into comparative insignificance. It is the dying Christ that reveals the living God.

So, dear friends, He is your way to God. See that ye seek the Father by Him alone. He is your Truth; grapple Him to your hearts, and by patient meditation and continual faithfulness enrich yourselves with all the communicated treasures that you have already received in Him. He is your Life; cleave to Him, that the quick Spirit that was in Him may pass into you and make you victors over all deaths, temporal and eternal. Know Him as a Friend, not as a mere historical person, or with mere head-knowledge, for to know a friend is something far deeper than to know a truth. 'Acquaint thyself with Him and be at peace.'

'This is life eternal, to know,' with the knowledge which is life and possession, 'Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

THE TRUE VISION OF GOD

'Philip saith unto Jesus, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9. Jesus saith unto Him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father, that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake.'—JOHN xiv. 8-11.

The vehement burst with which Philip interrupts the calm flow of our Lord's discourse is not the product of mere frivolity or curiosity. One hears the ring of earnestness in it, and the yearnings of many years find voice. Philip had felt out of his depth, no doubt, in the profound teachings which our Lord had been giving, but His last words about seeing God set a familiar chord vibrating. As an Old Testament believer he knew that Moses had once led the elders of Israel up to the mount where 'they saw the God of Israel,' and that to many others had been granted sensible manifestations of the divine presence. As a disciple he longed for some similar sign to confirm his faith. As a man he was conscious of the deep need which all of us have, whether we are conscious of it or not, for something more real and tangible than an unseeable and unknowable God. The peculiarities of Philip's temperament strengthened the desire. The first appearance that he makes in the Gospels is characteristically like this his last. To all Nathanael's objections he had only the reply, 'Come and see.' And here he says: 'Oh! if we could *see* the Father it would be enough.' He was one of the men to whom seeing is believing, and so he speaks.

His petition is childlike in its simplicity, beautiful in its trust, noble and true in its estimate of what men need. He longs to see God. He believes that Christ can show God; he is sure that the sight of God will satisfy the heart. These are errors, or truths, according to what is meant by 'seeing.' Philip meant a palpable manifestation, and so far he was wrong. Give the word its highest and its truest meaning, and Philip's error becomes grand truth. Our Lord gently, lovingly, and with only a hint of rebuke, answers the request, and seeks to disengage the error from the truth. His answer lies in the verses that we have read. Let us try to follow them, and, as we may, to skim their surface, for their depths are beyond us.

First of all, then, we have the sight of God in Christ as enough to answer men's longings. There is a world of sadness and tenderness, of suppressed pain and of grieved affection, in the first words of our Lord's reply. 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?' He seldom names His disciples. When He does, there is a deep cadence of affection in the designation. This man was one of the first disciples, the little original band called by Christ Himself, and thus had been with Him all the time of His ministry, and the Master wonders with a gentle wonder that, before eyes that loved Him as much as Philip's did, His continual self-revelation had been made to so little purpose. In the answer, in its first portion, there lies the reiteration of the thoughts that I was trying to dwell upon in the last sermon, which, therefore, I may lightly touch now—viz., that the sight of Christ is

the sight of God—'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'—and that not to know Christ as thus showing God is not to know Him at all—'Thou hast not known Me, Philip.' Further, there is the thought that the sight of God in Christ is sufficient, 'How sayest thou, Shew us the Father?' From all this we may gather some thoughts on which I lightly touch.

I. The first is, that we all do need to have God made visible to us.

The history of heathendom shows us that, in every land men have said, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.' And the highest cultivation of this highly cultivated and self-conscious twentieth century has not removed us from the same necessity that the rudest savage has, to have some kind of manifestation of the divine nature other than the dim and vague ones which are possible apart from the revelation of God in Christ. A God who is only the product of inferences from creation, or providence, or the mysteries of history, or the wonders of my own inner life, the creature of logic or of reflection, is very powerless to sway and influence men. The limitations of our faculties and the boundlessness of our hearts both cry out for a God who is nearer to us than that, and whom we can see and love and be sure of. The whole world wants the making visible of divinity as its deepest want. And *your* heart and mind require it. Nothing else will ever stay our hunger, will ever answer our questioning minds.

Christ meets this need. How can you make wisdom visible? How can a man see love or purity? How do I see your spirit? By the deeds of your body. And the only way by which God can ever come near enough to men to be a constant power and a constant motive in their lives is by their seeing Him at work in a Man, who amongst them is His image and revelation. Christ's whole life is the making visible of the invisible God. He is the manifestation to the world of the unseen Father.

That vision is enough—enough for mind, enough for heart, enough for will. There is none else that is sufficient, but this is. 'How sayest thou, Shew us the Father?' If we can see God it suffices us. Then the mind settles down upon the thought of Him as the basis of all being, and of all change, and the heart can twine itself round Him, and the seeking soul folds its wings and is at rest, and the troubled spirit is quiet, and the accusing conscience is silent, and the rebellious will is subdued, and the stormy passions are quieted, and in the inner kingdom is a great peace. The sight of God in Christ brings rest to every heart, and, Oh! the absence of the vision is the true secret of all disquiet. We are troubled and careful, and tossed from one stormy billow to another, and swept over by all the winds that blow, because we see not God, our Father, in the face of Jesus. 'Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,' is either a puerile petition, or the deepest and noblest prayer of the human heart. Blessed are they who have learned what it is to see, and know where that great sight is to be seen!

Our present knowledge and vision are far higher than that mere external symbol of God which this man wanted. The elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, but what they saw was but some symbolical manifestation of that which in itself is unseen and unattainable. But we who see God in Christ see no symbol but the Reality, and there is nothing more possible or to be hoped for here. Our present manifestation and sight of God in Christ does fall, in some ways unknown to us, beneath the bright hopes that we are entitled to cherish. But howsoever imperfect it may be, as measured against the perfection of the vision when we

shall see face to face, and know even as we are known, it is enough, and more than enough, for all the questionings and desires of our hungering spirits.

II. Our Lord goes on to a further answer, and points to the divine and mutual indwelling by which this sight is made possible.

'Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.' There are here, mainly, two things, Christ's claim to the oneness of unbroken communion, and Christ's claim, consequently, to the oneness of complete co-operation. 'I am in the Father' indicates the suppression of all independent and therefore rebellious will, consciousness, thought and action; 'And the Father in Me' indicates the influx into that perfectly filial Manhood of the whole fullness of God in unbroken, continuous, gentle, deep flow. These are the two sides of this great mystery on which neither wisdom nor reverence lead us to dilate; and they combine to express the closest and most uninterrupted blending, interpenetration, and communion.

And then follows the other claim, that because of this continuous mutual indwelling there is perfect cooperation. This is also stated in terms corresponding to the preceding double representation. 'The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself,' corresponds to, 'I am in the Father.' 'The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works,' corresponds to 'The Father in Me.' The two put together teach us this, that by reason of that mysterious and ineffable union of communion, Jesus Christ in all His words and in all His works is the perfect instrument of the divine will, so that His words are God's words, and His works are God's works; so that, when He speaks, His gentle wisdom, His loving sympathy, His melting tenderness, His authoritative commands, His prophetic threatenings, are the speech of God, and that when He acts, whether it be by miracle or in the ordinary deeds of His life, what we see is God working before our eyes as we never see Him in any human being.

And from all this follow just two or three considerations which I name. Note the absolute absence of any consciousness on Christ's part of the smallest deflection or disharmony between Himself and the Father. Two triangles laid on each other are in every line, point, and angle absolutely coincident. That humanity is capable of receiving the whole inflow of God, and that indwelling God is perfectly expressed in the humanity. There is no trace of a consciousness of sin. Everything that Jesus Christ said He knew to be God's speaking; everything that He did He knew to be God's acting. There were no barriers between the two. Jesus Christ was conscious of no separation—not the thinnest film of air between these Two who adhered and inhered so closely and so continuously. It is an awful assertion.

Now I pray you to ask yourselves the question: If this was what Christ said, what did He think of Himself? And is this a Man, like the rest of us, with blotches and sins, with failures to embody His own ideas, and still more to carry out in life the will that He knows to be God's will? Is this a man like other men who thus speaks to us? If Jesus had this consciousness, either He was ludicrously, tragically, blasphemously, utterly mistaken and untrustworthy, or He is what the Church in all ages has confessed Him to be, 'the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

III. Lastly, our Lord further sets before us the faith to which He invites us on the ground of His union with, and revelation of, God.

'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works' sake.' Observe that the verb at the beginning of this last verse of our text passes into a plural form. Our Lord has done with Philip especially, and speaks now to all who hear Him, and to us amongst the rest of His auditors. He bids us *believe* Him, and believe something about Him on the strength of His own testimony, or, in default of that, and as second best, believe Him on the testimony of His works. I gather together what I have to say about this point into three remarks.

The true bond of union between men and Jesus Christ is faith. We have to trust, and that is better than sight. We have to trust *Him*. He is the personal Object of our faith. In all faith there is what I may call a moral and a voluntary element. A man believes a proposition because it is forced upon him, and his intelligence is obliged to accept it. A man trusts Christ because he *will* trust Him, and the moral and voluntary element carries us far beyond the mere intellectual conception of faith as the assent to a set of theological propositions. Faith really is the outgoing of the whole man—heart, will, intellect, and all—to a person whom it grasps. But the Christ that you and I have to trust is the Christ as He Himself has declared Himself to us. 'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.' There is a bastard, mutilated kind of thing that calls itself Christian faith, that goes about the world in this generation, which believes in Jesus Christ in all sorts of beautiful ways, but it will not believe in Him as the Personal Revelation and making visible of the unseen God. Jesus Christ Himself tells us here that that is not the kind of faith which He invites us to put forth. If we put forth that only, we have not yet come to understand Him. Oh, dear friends! Christ as here declared to us by Himself is the only Christ to whom it is right to give our trust. If He be not God manifest in the flesh, I ought not to trust Him. I may admire Him as a historical personage; I may reverence Him for His wisdom and beauty; I may even in some vague way have a kind of love to Him. But what in the name of common sense shall I trust Him for? And why should He call upon me to exercise faith in Him unless He stand before me as the adequate Object of a man's trust—namely, the manifest God?

And then, further, note that believing in the sense of trusting is seeing and knowing. Philip said, 'Shew us the Father.' Christ answers, 'Believe, and thou dost see.' If you look back upon the previous verses of this chapter, you will find that in the earlier portion of them the key-word is 'know'; that in the second portion of them the key-word is 'see'; that in this portion of them the key-word is 'believe.' The world says, 'Ah! seeing is believing.' The Gospel says, 'Believing is seeing.' The true way to knowledge, and to a better vision than the uncertain vision of the eye, is faith. In certitude and in directness, the knowledge of God that we have through faith in the Christ whom our eyes have never seen is far ahead of the certitude and the directness that attach to our mere bodily sight; and so the key to all divine knowledge, and the sure road to the truest vision of God, is faith.

Further, faith, even if based upon lower than the highest grounds, is still faith, and acceptable to Him: 'Or else believe Me for the very works' sake.' The 'works' are mainly, I suppose, though not exclusively, His miracles. And if so, we are here taught that, if a man has not come to that point of spiritual susceptibility in which the image of Jesus Christ lays hold upon His heart and obliges him to trust Him and to love Him, there are yet the

miracles to look at; and the faith that grasps them, and by help of that ladder climbs to Him, though it be second best, is yet real. The evidence of miracles is subordinate, and yet it is valid and true. So our Lord contradicts both the exaggerations of past generations and the exaggerations of this, and neither asserts that the great reason for faith is miracles, nor that miracles are of no use at all. Former centuries in the Christian Church reiterated the former exaggeration, and thus partly provoked the exaggeration of this day. Let us keep the middle course: there is a better way of coming to Christ than through the gate of miracles, and that is that He should stamp His own divine sweetness and elevation upon our minds and hearts. But if we have not reached that point, do not let us kick away the ladder that may help us to it. 'Believe Him for the very works' sake.' Imperfect faith may be the highway to perfection. Let us follow the light, if it be but a far-off glimmer, sure that it will bring us into noontide day if we are faithful to its leading.

On the other hand, dear friends, let us remember that no faith avails itself of all the treasures laid up for it, which does not lay hold upon Christ in the character in which He presents Himself. The only adequate, worthy trust in Him is the trust which grasps Him as the Incarnate God and Saviour. Only such a faith does justice to His own claim. Only such a faith is the sure path to vision and to knowledge. Only such a faith draws down the blessing of a questioning intellect answered, a hungry heart satisfied, a conscience, accusing and prophetic of a judgment to come, cleansed and purified.

To each of us Christ addresses His merciful invitation, 'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.' May we all answer, 'We believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!'

CHRIST'S WORKS AND OURS

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. 13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it.'—JOHN xiv. 12-14.

I have already pointed out in a previous sermon that the key-word of this context is 'Believe!' In three successive verses we find it, each time widening in its application. We have first the question to the single disciple: 'Philip! believest thou not?' We have then the invitation addressed to the whole group: 'Believe Me!' And here we have a wholly general expression referring to all who, in every generation and corner of the world, put their trust in Christ, and extending the sunshine of this great promise to whosoever believeth in Him. Our Lord has pointed to *believing* as the great antidote to a troubled heart, as the sure way of knowing the Father, as the better substitute for sight; and now here He opens before us still more wonderful prerogatives and effects of faith. His words carry us up into lofty and misty regions, where we can neither breathe freely nor see clearly, except as we hold to His words. Therefore He prefaces them with His 'Verily, verily!' bidding us listen to them with sharpened attention as the disclosure of something wonderful, and receive them with unfaltering confidence, on His authority, however marvellous and otherwise undiscoverable they may be.

What is it, then, that He thus commends to our acceptance? If I may venture a paraphrase which may at least have the advantage of being cast into less familiar words, it is just this, that because of, and after, Christ's departure from earth, He will, in response to prayer, work upon faithful souls in such a fashion as that they will do what He did, and in some sense will do even more.

I. We have here the continuous work of the exalted Lord for and through His servants.

These disciples, of course, were trembling and oppressed with the thought that the departure of Jesus would be the end of His ceaseless activity for them, on which they had depended implicitly for so long. Henceforward, whatever distress or need might come, that Voice would be silent, and that Hand motionless, and they would be left to face every storm, uncompanioned and uncounselled. Some of us know how dreary such experience makes life, and we can understand how these men shrank from the prospect. Christ's words give strength to meet that trial, and not only tell them that after He is gone they will be able to do what they cannot do now, and what He used to do for them, but that in them He will work as well as for them, and be the power of their action, after He has departed.

For, notice the remarkable connection of the words with which we are dealing. 'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall *he* do,' and the ground of that is 'because I go to My Father,' and whatsoever the believer 'shall ask, *I* will do.'

So, then, there are here two very distinct paths on which Christ represents to us that His future activity will travel; the one, that of doing for us, in response to our prayers; the other

that of working on us and in us, so that our acts are His and His acts are ours. We may look at these two for a moment separately.

Here, then, there is clearly stated this great thought, that Christ's removal from the world is not the end of His activity in the world and on material things, but that, absent, He still is a present power, and having passed through death, and been removed from sense, He can still operate upon the things round us, and move these according to His will. We are not to water down such words as these into any such thought as that the continuous influence of the memory and history of His past will be a present power in all ages.

That is true, gloriously and uniquely true, but that is not the truth which He speaks here. Over and above that perpetual influence of past recorded work, there is the present influence of His present work, and to-day He is working as truly as He wrought when on earth. One form of His work was finished on Calvary, as His dying breath proclaimed; but there is another work of Christ in the midst of the ages, moving the pawns on the chessboard of the world, and presiding over the fortunes of the solemn conflict, which will not be ended until that day when the angel voices shall chant, 'It is done! The kingdoms of the world are the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.' The living Christ works by a true forth-putting of His own present power upon material things, and amidst the providences of life. And therefore these disciples were not to be cast down as if His work for them were ended.

Now it is clear, of course, that such words as these do demand for their vindication something perfectly unique and solitary in the nature and person of Jesus Christ. All other men's work is cut in twain by death. 'This man, having served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption,' that is the epitaph over the greatest thinkers, statesmen, heroes, poets, the epitaph for the tenderest and most hopeful. Father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, all cease to act when they die, and though thunders should break, they are silent and can help no more. But Christ is living to-day, and working all around us.

Now, brethren, it is of the last importance for the joyousness of our Christian lives, and for the courage of our conflict with sorrow and sin, that we should give a very prominent place in our creeds, and our hearts, to this great truth of a living Christ. What a joyful sense of companionship it brings to the solitary, what calmness of vision in contemplating the complications and calamities of the world's history, if we grasp firmly the assurance that the living Christ is actually working by the present forth-putting of His power in the world to-day!

But that is not all. There is another path on which our Lord shows us here a glimpse of His working, not only for us, but on and in and therefore through us, so that the deeds that we do in faith that rests upon Him are in one aspect His, and in another ours.

'The works that I do shall He do also'; because 'whatsoever ye shall ask I will do it.'

We have not to think only of a Lord whose activity for us, beneficent and marvellous as it is, was finished in the misty past upon the Cross, nor have we only to think of a Lord whose activity for us, mighty and comforting as it is to all the solitary and struggling, is wrought as from the heights of the heavens, but we have to think of One who is beside us and in us and knows the hidden paths that no eye sees, and no foot but His can tread, into the inmost

recesses of our souls, and there can enter as King and righteousness, as life and strength. This is the deepest of the lessons that He would teach us here. 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and through me, if I keep close to Him, will work mightily in forms that my poor manhood could never have reached. The emblem of the vine and the branches, and the other emblem of the house and its inhabitants, and the other of the head and the members, all point to this one same thing which shallow and unspiritual men call 'mystical,' but which is the very heart of the Christian prerogative and the anchor of the Christian hope. Christ in us is our present righteousness and our hope of a future glory.

And now mark that a still more solemn and mysterious aspect of this union of Jesus Christ and the believer is given, since it is set forth as resulting in our doing Christ's works, and Christ doing ours; and therein is paralleled with the yet more wonderful and ineffable union between the Father and the Son. It is no accident that in one clause He says, 'I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works'; and that in the next He says, 'The works that I do shall he do also'; and so bids us see in that union between the Father and the Son, and in that consequent union of co-operation between Him and His Father, a pattern after which our union with Him is to be moulded, both as regards the closeness of its intimacy and as regards the resulting manifestations in life. Christ is in us and we in Christ in some measure as the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son. And the works that we do He does in some fashion that faintly echoes and shadows the perfect co-operation of the Father and the Son in the works that the Christ did upon the earth.

All the doings of a Christian man, if done in faith, and holding by Christ, are Christ's doings, inasmuch as He is the life and the power which does them all. And Christ's deeds are reproduced and perpetuated in His humble follower, inasmuch as the life which is imparted will unfold itself according to its own kind; and he that loves Christ will be changed into His likeness, and become a partaker of His Spirit. So let us curb all self-dependence and self-will, that that mighty tide may flow into us; and let us cast from us all timidity, distrust, and gloom, and be strong in the assurance that we have a Christ living in the heavens to work for us, and living within us to work through us.

There is no record of the Ascension in John's Gospel, but these words of my text unveil to us the inmost meaning of that Ascension, and are in full accord with the great picture which one of the Evangelists has drawn—a picture in two halves, which yet are knit together into one. 'So then, after He had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God; and they went forth and preached everywhere.' What a contrast between the two—the repose above, the toil below! Yes! But the next words knit them together—'The Lord also working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.'

II. Note, in the next place, the greater work of the servants on and for whom the Lord works. 'Greater works than these shall he do.' Is, then, the servant greater than his Lord, and he that is sent greater than He that sent him? Not so, for whatsoever the servant does is done because the Lord is with and in him, and the contrast that is drawn between the works that Christ does on earth and the greater works that the servant is to do hereafter is, properly and at bottom, the contrast between Christ's manifestations in the time of His

earthly limitation and humiliation, and His manifestations in the time of His Ascension and celestial glory.

We need not be afraid that such great words as these in any measure trench on the unique and unapproachable character of the earthly work of Christ in its two aspects, which are one—of Revelation and Redemption. These are finished, and need no copy, no repetition, no perpetuation, until the end of time. But the work of objective Revelation, which was completed when He ascended, and the work of Redemption which was finished when He rose—these require to be applied through the ages. And it is in regard to the application of the finished work of Christ to the actual accomplishment of its contemplated consequences, that the comparison is drawn between the limited sphere and the small results of Christ's work upon earth, and the worldwide sweep and majestic magnitude of the results of the application of that work by His servants' witnessing work. The wider and more complete spiritual results achieved by the ministration of the servants than by the ministration of the Lord is the point of comparison here. And I need only remind you that the poorest Christian who can go to a brother soul, and by word or life can draw that soul to a Christ whom it apprehends as dying for its sins and raised for its glorifying, does a mightier thing than it was possible for the Master to do by life or lip whilst He was here upon earth. For the Redemption had to be completed in act before it could be proclaimed in word; and Christ had no such weapon in His hands with which to draw men's souls, and cast down the high places of evil, as we have when we can say, 'We testify unto you that the Son of God hath died for our sins, and is raised again according to the Scriptures.' Nor need I do more than remind you of the comparison, so exalting for His humility and so humbling for our self-exaltation, between the narrow sphere in which His earthly ministrations had to operate and the worldwide scope which is given to His servants. 'He laid His hands on a few sick folk, and healed them'; and at the end of His life there were one hundred and twenty disciples in Jerusalem and five hundred in Galilee, and you might have put them all into this chapel and had ample room to spare. That was all that Jesus Christ had done; while to-day and now the world is being leavened and the kingdoms of the earth are beginning to recognise His name. 'Greater works than these shall he do' who lets Christ in him do all His works.

III. Lastly, notice the conditions on which the exalted Lord works for and on His servants.

These are two, faith and prayer.

'He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also.' Faith, the simple act of loving trust in Jesus Christ, opens the door of our hearts and natures for the entrance of all His solemn Omnipotence, and makes us possessors of it. It is the condition, and the only condition, and plainly the indispensable condition, of possessing this divine Christ's power, that we should trust ourselves to Him that gives it. And if we do, then we shall not trust in vain, but to us there will come power that will surpass our desire, and fill us with its own rejoicing and pure energy. Faith will make us like Christ. Faith is intensely practical. 'He that believeth shall *do*.' It is no mere cold assent to a creed which is utterly impotent to operate upon men's acts, no mere hysterical emotion which is utterly impotent to energise into nobilities of service and miracles of consecration, but it is the affiance of the whole nature which spreads itself before Him and prays, 'Fill my emptiness and vitalise me with

Thine own Spirit.' That is the faith which is ever answered by the inrush of the divine power, and the measure of our capacity of receiving is the measure of His gift to us.

So if Christian individuals and Christian communities are impotent, or all but impotent, there is no difficulty in understanding why. They have cut the connection, they have shut the tap. They lack faith; and so their power is weakness. 'Why could we not cast him out?' said they, perplexed when they had no need to be. 'Why could you not cast him out? Because you do not believe that I, working in you, can cast him out. That is why; and the only why.' Let us learn that the secret of Christians' weakness is the weakness of their Christian faith.

And the other condition is prayer. 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name I will do it,' and He repeats it, for confirmation and for greater emphasis. 'If ye shall ask anything in My name,' or, as perhaps that clause ought to be read with some versions, 'If ye shall ask Me anything in My name I will do it.'

Three points may be named here. Our power depends upon our prayer. God's and Christ's fullness and willingness to communicate do not depend upon our prayer. But our capacity to receive of that fullness, and so the possibility of its communication to us, do depend upon our prayer. 'We have not because we ask not.'

The power of our prayer depends upon our conscious oneness with the revealed Christ. 'If ye shall ask in My name,' says He. And people think they have fulfilled the condition when, in a mechanical and external manner, they say, as a formula at the end of petitions that have been all stuffed full of self-will and selfishness, 'for Christ's sake. Amen!' and then they wonder they do not get them answered! Is that asking in Christ's name?

Christ's name is the revelation of Christ's character, and to do a thing in the name of another person is to do it as His representative, and as realising that in some deep and real sense—for the present purpose at all events—we are one with Him. And it is when we know ourselves to be united to Christ and one with Him, and representative in a true fashion of Himself, as well as when, in humble reliance on His work for us and His loving heart, we draw near, that our prayer has power, as the old divines used to say, 'to move the Hand that moves the world,' and to bring down a rush of blessing upon our heads. Prayer in the name of Christ is hard to offer. It needs much discipline and watchfulness; it excludes all self-will and selfishness. And if, as my text tells us, the end of the Son's working is the glory of the Father, that same end, and not our own ease or comfort, must be the end and object of all prayer which is offered in His name. When we so pray we get an answer. And the reason why such multitudes of prayers never travel higher than the roof, and bring no blessings to him who prays, is because they are not prayers in Christ's name.

Prayer in His name will pass into prayer to Him. As He not obscurely teaches us here (if we adopt the reading to which I have already referred), He has an ear to hear such requests, and He wields divine power to answer. Surely it was not blasphemy nor any diversion of the worship due to God alone, when the dying martyr outside the city wall cried and said, 'Lord Jesus! receive my spirit.' Nor is it any departure from the solemnest obligations laid upon us by the unity of the divine nature, nor are we bringing idolatrous petitions to another than the Father, when we draw near to Christ and ask Him to give us

that which He gives as the Father's gift, and to work on us that which the Father that dwelleth in Him works through Him for us.

Trust yourselves to Christ, and let your desires be stilled, to listen to His voice in you, and let that voice speak. And then, dear brethren, we shall be lifted above ourselves, and strength will flow into us, and we shall be able to say, 'I can do all things, through the Christ that dwells in me and makes me strong.' And just as the glad, sunny waters of the incoming tide fill the empty places of some oozy harbour, where all the ships are lying as if dead, and the mud is festering in the sunshine, so into the slimy emptiness of our corrupt hearts there will pour the flashing sunlit wave, the ever fresh rush of His power; and 'everything will live whithersoever it cometh,' and we shall be able to say in all humility, and yet in glad recognition of Christ's faithfulness to this, His transcendent promise, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' 'because the life which I live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God.'

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'—JOHN xiv, 15.

As we have seen in former sermons, the keyword of the preceding context is 'Believe!' and that word passes now into 'Love.' The order here is the order of experience. There is first the believing gaze upon the Christ as He is revealed—the image of the invisible God. That kindles love, and prompts to obedience.

There is another very beautiful and subtle link of connection between these words and the preceding. Our Lord has just been saying, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do.' Is the parallel wholly accidental or fanciful between the Lord who does as the servant asks and the servant who is to do as the Lord commands? On both sides there is love delighting to be set in motion by a message from the other side. On the one part there is love supreme which commands and delights to be asked, on the other part there is love dependent, which asks and delights to be commanded; and though the gulf between the two is great, and the difference between Christ's law and our petitions is infinite, yet there is an analogy.

I pause on these words, though they are introduced here only as the basis of the great promise which follows, because they open out into such wide fields. They contain the all-sufficient law of Christian conduct. They contain the one motive adequate to bring that law into realisation. They disclose the very roots of Christian morality, and part of the secret of Christ's unique power and influence amongst men. They come with a message of encouragement to all souls despairing of being able to do that which they would, and of freedom to all men burdened with a crowd of minute and external regulations. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments'—there are three points to be dwelt upon here—namely, the all-sufficient ideal or guide of life, the all-powerful motive which Christ brings to bear, and the all-subduing gaze of faith by which that motive is brought into action.

I. We have here the all-sufficient ideal or guide for life.

Jesus Christ is not speaking merely to that little handful of men in the upper chamber, but to all generations and to all lands, to the end of time and round the world. The authoritative tone which He assumes here is very noteworthy. He speaks as Jehovah spoke from Sinai, and quotes the very words of the old law when He speaks of 'keeping My commandments.' There are distinctly involved in this quite incidental utterance of Christ's two startling things—one the assumption of His right to impose His will upon every human being, and the other His assumption that His will contains the all-sufficient directory for human conduct.

What, then, are His commandments? Those which He spoke are plain and simple; and people who wish to pick holes in the greatness of Christ's work in the world tell us that you can match almost all His precepts up and down amongst moralists and philosophers, and they crow very loud if, scratching amongst Rabbinical dust-heaps, they find something that looks like anything that He once said. Be it so! What does that matter? Christ's

'commandments' are Christ Himself. This is the originality and uniqueness of Christ as a moral Teacher, that He says, not 'Do this, that, and the other thing,' but 'Copy Me.' 'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' His commandments are Himself; and the sum of them all is this—a character perfectly self-oblivious, and wholly penetrated and saturated with joyful, filial submission to the Father, and uttermost and entire giving Himself away to His brethren. That is Christ's commandment which He bids us keep, and His law is to be found in His life.

And then, if that be so, what a change passes on the aspect of law, when we take Christ as being our living embodiment of it! Everything that was hard, repellent, far-off, cold, vanishes. We have no longer 'tables of stone,' but 'fleshy tables of the heart'; and the Law stands before us, a Being to be loved, to be clung to, to be trusted, and whom it is blessedness to know and perfection to resemble. The rails upon which the train travels may be rigid, but they mean safety, and they carry men smoothly into otherwise inaccessible lands. So the life of Jesus Christ brought to us is the firm and plain track along which we are to travel; and all that was difficult and hard in the cold thought of *duty* becomes changed into the attraction of a living Pattern and Example. This living and breathing and loving commandment is all-sufficient for every detail and complexity of human life. It is so by the confession of believers and of unbelievers, by the joyful confession of the one, and by the frank acknowledgment of many of the others. Listen to one of them. 'Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left, a unique Figure, not more unlike all His predecessors than all His followers…. Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in selecting this Man as the ideal Representative and Guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.'

It is enough for conduct, it is enough for character, it is enough in all perplexities of conflicting duties, that we listen to and obey the voice that says, 'Keep My commandments.'

II. Now note, secondly, the all-powerful motive.

Probably my text is best understood as the Revised Version understands it, which reads, 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments,' making it an assurance and not an injunction. Christ speaks with the calm confidence that love to Him will have power enough to sway the life. His utterance here is not the addition of another commandment to the list, but rather the pointing out of how they may all be kept.

The principle that underlies these words, then, is this, that love is the foundation of obedience, and obedience is the sure outcome and result of love. That is true in regard to those lower forms of love, which may teach us something of the operation of the higher. We all know that love which is real, and not simply passion and selfishness with a mask on, delights most chiefly in knowing and conforming to the will of the beloved, and that there is nothing sweeter than to be commanded by the dear voice and to obey for dear love's sake. And you have only to take that which is the experience of every true heart, in a thousand sweet ways in daily life, and to lift it into the higher region, and to transfer it to the bond that unites us with Jesus Christ, to see that He has invoked no illusory, but an omnipotent power when He has rested the whole force of His transforming and sanctifying energy

upon this one principle, 'If ye love Me, the Lawgiver, ye will keep the commandments of My Law.'

That is exactly what distinguishes and lifts the morality of the Gospel above all other systems. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of his duty than the best man does. It is not for want of knowledge that men go to the devil, but it is for want of power or will to live their knowledge. And what morality fails to do, with its clearest utterances of human duty, Christ comes and does. The one law is like the useless proclamations posted up in some rebellious district, where there is no army to back them, and the king's authority from whom they come is flouted. The other law gets itself obeyed. Such is the difference between the powerless morality of the world and the commandment of Jesus Christ. Here is the road plain and straight. What matters that, if there is no force to draw the cart along it? There might as well be no road at all. Here stand all your looms, polished and in perfect order, but there is no steam in the boilers; and so there is no motion, and nothing is woven. What we want is not law, but power, and what the Gospel gives us, and stands alone in giving us, is not merely the knowledge of the will of God, and the clear revelation of what we ought to be, but the power to become it.

Love does that, and love alone. That strong force brought into action in our hearts will drive out from thence all rivals, all false and low things. The true way to cleanse the Augean stables, as the old myth has it, was to turn the river into them. It would have been endless work to wheel out the filth in wheelbarrows loaded by spades: turn the stream in, and it will sweep away all the foulness. When the Ark comes into the Temple, Dagon lies, a mutilated stump, upon the threshold. When Christ comes into my heart, then all the obscene and twilight-loving shapes that lurked there, and defiled it, will vanish like ghosts at cock-crowing before His calm and pure Presence. He, and He alone, entering my heart by the portals of my love, will coerce my evil and stimulate my good. And if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments.

Now, brethren, here is a plain test and a double-barrelled one, which tries both our love and our obedience with a sharp touchstone. 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.' That implies, first, that there is no love worth calling so which does not keep the commandment. All the emotional and the mystic, and the so-called higher parts of Christian experience, have to be content to submit to this plain test—do they help us to live as Christ would have us, and that because He would have us? Love to Him that does not keep His commandments is either spurious or dangerously feeble. The true sign of its presence in the heart and the noblest of its operations is not to be found in high-pitched expressions of fervid emotion, nor even in the sacred joys of solitary communion, but in its making us, while in the rough struggle of daily life, and surrounded by trivial tasks, live near Him, and by Him, and for Him, and like Him. If I live so, I love Him; if not, not. Not that I mean to say that in regard to each individual action of a Christian man's life there must be the conscious presence of reference to the supreme love, but that each individual action of the life ought to come from a character of which that reference to the supreme love is the very formative principle and foundation. The colouring matter put in at the fountain will dye every drop of the stream; and they whose inmost hearts are tinged and tinctured with the sweet love of Jesus Christ, from their hearts will go forth issues of life all coloured and moulded thereby. Test your Christian love by your practical obedience.

And, on the other hand, there is no obedience worth calling so which is not the child of love; and all the multitude of right things which Christians do without that motive are made short work of by that consideration. Obedience which is formal, mechanical, matter-of-course, without the presence in it of a loving submission of the will; obedience which is reluctant, calculated, forced upon us by dread, imitated from others—all that is nothing; and Jesus Christ does not count it as obedience at all. This is a sieve with very small meshes, and there will be a great deal of rubbish left in it after the shaking. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' The 'keeping of My commandments' which has not 'love to Me' underlying it is no keeping at all.

III. And so, lastly, notice the all-subduing gaze.

That is not included in my text, but it is necessary in order to complete the view of the forces to which Jesus Christ here entrusts the hallowing of life and the sanctifying of our nature; and we are led to refer to it by what I have already pointed out; the connection between the 'love' of my text and the 'believe' of the preceding verses. I can fancy a man saying, 'Keep His commandments? Woe is me! How am I to keep?' The answer is 'Love.' And I can fancy him saying 'Love?' Yes! 'And how am I to love? I cannot get up love at the word of command, or by any voluntary effort.' And the answer comes again, 'Believe!' Trust Christ, and you will love Him. Love Him and you will do His will. And then the question comes again, 'Believe what?' And the answer comes, 'Believe that He is the Son of God who died for you.'

Nothing else will kindle a man's love than the faithful contemplation and grasp of Christ in that character and aspect. Only the redeeming Christ affords a reasonable ground for our love to Him. Here is a dead man, dead for nineteen centuries, expecting you and me to have towards Him a vivid personal affection which will influence our conduct and our character. What right has He to expect that? There is only one reasonable ground upon which I may be called to love Jesus Christ, and that is that He died for me, and such a love towards such a Christ is the only thing which will wield power sufficient to guide, to coerce, to restrain, to constrain, and to sustain my weak, wayward, rebellious, and sluggish will. All other emotions of so-called admiration and worship and reverence and affection for Jesus Christ are apt to be tepid; but this one has power and warmth in it.

Here is a unique fact in the history of the world, that not only did He make this astounding claim upon all subsequent generations; but that all subsequent generations have responded to it, and that to-day there are millions of men who love Jesus Christ with a love warm, personal, deep, powerful—the spring of all their goodness and the Lord of their lives. Why do they? For one reason only. Because they believe that He died for them individually, and that He lives an ascended yet ever-present Helper and Lover of their souls.

My brethren, that conviction, and that conviction only, as I venture to affirm, has power to send a glow of love into the heart which will move all the limbs in swift and happy obedience. That conviction, and that conviction alone, will melt the thick-ribbed ice of our spirits and will make it flow down in sweet waters. The love that has looked upon the Cross will be the fulfilling of the law of Him that speaks from the Throne. When our faith has

grasped Him, as enduring that cross for us, then our love will be awakened to hear and to do His commandments.

'We love Him because He first loved us,' and such love will flower and fruit in obedience. I shall keep His commandments when I love Him. I shall love Him with a love that makes my will plastic and my life a glad service, when by faith I grasp Him as the Incarnate Lord, 'who loved me and gave Himself for me.'

THE COMFORTER GIVEN

'And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.'—JOHN xiv. 16,17.

The 'and' at the beginning of these words shows us that they are continuous with and the consequence of what precedes. 'If ye love Me, *ye* will *keep* My commandments, and *I* will *pray* ... and *He* will *send*.' Such is the series; but we must also remember that, as we have seen in previous sermons, the obedience spoken of in the clause before my text is itself treated as a consequence of some preceding steps. The ladder that is fixed upon earth and has its summit in heaven has for its rungs, first and lowest, 'believe'; second, 'love'; third, 'obey.' And thus the context carries us from the very basis of the Christian life up into its highest reward, even the larger gift to an obedient spirit of that Great Spirit, who is the Comforter and the Teacher.

And there is another very striking link of connection between these words and the preceding. There are, if I may so say, two telephones across the abyss that separates the ascended Christ and us. One of them is contained in His words, 'If ye ask anything in My name I will do it'; the other is contained in these words, 'If ye keep My commandments I will ask.' Love on this side of the great cleft sets love on the other side of it in motion in a twofold fashion. If we ask, He does; if we do, He asks. His action is the answer to our prayers, and His prayers are the answer to our obedient action. So we have here these points—the praying Christ and the giving Father; the abiding Gift; the blind world and the recipient disciples.

I. Note, then, first, the praying Christ and the giving Father.

'I will ask and He will give' seems a strange drop from the lofty claims with which we have become familiar in the earlier verses of this chapter. 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'; 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'; 'If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it'; 'Keep My commandments.' All these distinctly express, or necessarily imply, divine nature, prerogatives, and authority. But here the voice that spake the perfect revelation of God, and gave utterance authoritatively to the perfect law of life, softens and lowers its tones in petition; and Jesus Christ joins the rank of the suppliants. Now common sense tells us that apparently diverse views lying so close together in one continuous stream of speech cannot have seemed to the utterer of them to be contradictory; and I venture to affirm that there is no explanation which does justice to these two sides of Christ's consciousness—the one all divine and authoritative and lofty, and the other all lowly and identifying Himself with petitioners and suppliants everywhere—except the old-fashioned and to-day discredited belief that He is 'God manifest in the flesh,' who prays in His Manhood and hears prayer in His Divinity. The bare humanistic view which emphasises such utterances as these of my text does not, for the life of it, know what to do with the other ones, and

cannot manage to unite these two images into a stereoscopic solid. That is reserved for the faith which believes in the Manhood and in the Deity of our Lord and Saviour.

His intercession is the great hope of the Christian heart. His intercession is the great activity of His present exalted and glorious state. His intercession is no mere verbal utterance, nor the representation to the Father of an alien or a diverse will, but His intercession, mysterious as it is, and unfathomable to our poor, short lines and light plummets, must mean this at all events—His continual activity in presenting before the divine Father, as the motive and condition of His petition being granted, His own great work upon the Cross. The High Priest passes within the veil, bearing in His hand the offering which He has made, and by reason of that offering, and of His powerful presence before the mercy-seat, all the spiritual gifts which redeem and regenerate and sanctify humanity are for ever coming forth. 'I will pray, and He will give,' is but one way of saying, 'Seeing then, that we have a great High Priest over the House of God who is entered within the veil, let us draw near.'

But I would have you notice how, as is always the case in all utterances of Jesus Christ which express the lowest humiliation and completest identification of Himself with humanity, there is ever present some touch of obscured glory, some all but suppressed flash of brightness which will not be wholly concealed. Note two things in this great utterance; one, Christ's quiet assumption that all through the ages, and today, nineteen centuries after He died, He knows, at the moment of their being done, His servants' deeds. 'Keep my commandments, and, knowing that you keep them, I will then and there pray for you.' He claims in the lowly words an altogether supernatural, abnormal, divine cognisance of all the acts of men down the ages and across the gulf between earth and heaven.

And the other signature of divinity stamped on the prayer of Christ is His certitude of the answer. 'I will ask and He will give': He puts, as it were, the Father's act in pledge to us, and assures us, in a tone of certainty, which is not merely the assurance of faith, but the certitude of One who is 'one with the Father,' that His prayer brings ever its answer. 'Father! I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me.' How strange! How far beyond the warrantable language of man! And how impossible for a fisherman of Bethsaida to imagine, if he had not heard, that strange blending of submission and of authority which speaks in such words!

Then, remember what I have already said, that, according to the teaching of this verse, taken in connection with its context, that which put in motion Christ's Intercessory activity, as represented in my text, is the obedience of a Christian man. If you obey He will pray, and the Father will send. So the reward of imperfect obedience is the larger measure given to us of that divine Spirit by whose indwelling obedience becomes possible, and self-surrender a joy and a power. And that is not merely because of the natural operation by which any kind of conduct tends to repeat itself in more complete measure, nor is it merely a case of 'to him that hath shall be given'; as a man's arm is strengthened by exercise, and any faculty becomes more assured, and swift, and at the command of its owner, by use. But there is a distinct supernatural impartation to every obedient heart of divine gifts which come straight through Jesus Christ to it. He Himself, in this immediate context, says, 'If I depart I will send Him unto you,' and the true conception is that in that Spirit's gift, which is a

reality waiting as its crown and reward upon our poor stained obedience, the whole Godhead is present; the Father the Source, the Son the Channel, the Spirit the Gift.

II. And so, secondly, note what our text tells us of that abiding gift.

'He will send another Comforter,' 'that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth.' I suppose I may take it for granted that most of my audience know all that need be said as to the meaning of this word 'Comforter.' In our present modern English it has a very much narrower range of meaning than its etymology would give it, and than probably it had when it was first used in an English translation. 'Comforter' means a great deal more than 'consoler,' though we have narrowed it to that signification almost exclusively. It means not only one who administers sweet whispers of consolation in sorrow, but one who, in any circumstances, by his presence makes strong. And the original Greek word, of which it is the translation here, has a precisely analogous meaning; its original signification being that of 'one who is called to the aid of another,' primarily as an advocate in a court of law, but more widely as a helper in any form whatsoever. And that is the idea which is to be attached to the word here:—a Comforter who makes strong by His presence; the Paraclete, who is our Advocate, Helper, Guide, and Instructor. Need I dwell upon the great thoughts that spring from that metaphor; how we have to look for a Person, and not merely a vague influence; a divine Person who will be by our sides on condition of our faith, love, and obedience, to be our Strength in all weakness, our Peace in all trouble, our Wisdom in all darkness, our Guide in every perplexity, our Comforter and Cherisher, our Righteousness when sin is strong, the Victor over our temptations, and the Companion and Sweetener of our solitude? The metaphors with which Scripture represents this great personal Influence are full of instruction and beauty. He comes as 'the Fire,' which melts, which warms, which cleanses, which quickens. He comes as the 'rushing, mighty Wind,' which bears health upon its wings, and sometimes breathes softly as an infant's breath, and sometimes sweeps with irresistible power. He comes as the 'Oil,' gently flowing, lubricating, making every joint supple, nourishing. He comes as the 'Water of Life,' refreshing, vitalising, quickening all growth. He comes fluttering down as the Dove of God, the bird of peace that will brood upon our hearts. The predicates which Scripture attaches to that great Name are equally various, and are full of teaching as to the manner in which He is the Comforter and the Advocate. He is the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Power, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of a sound Mind, the Spirit of Sonship, the Spirit of Supplication, and of many great things besides. And this sweet, strong, all-sufficient Person is offered to each of us, and waits to enter our hearts.

And, says Christ, this Strengthener and Advocate is to replace Me and to carry on My work. 'He will send *another* Comforter.' Who was the other but the Master who was speaking? So all that that handful of men had found of sweetness and shelter and assured guidance, and stay for their weakness, and enlightenment for their darkness, and companionship for their solitude, and a breast on which to rest their heads, and love in which to bathe their hearts, all *these* this divine Spirit will bring to each of us if we will.

And further, our Lord tells us that this strong continuer of His presence will be a permanent Companion. 'He will abide with you for ever.' He was comforting the disciples who were trembling at the thought of His departure, and knowing that all the sweetness of these three short years had come to an end; and He says to them, and through them to all

the ages to the end of time: 'Here is the abiding Guest, that nothing but your own sin will ever cast out from your hearts.'

And Christ tells us how this great Spirit will do His work. He is the 'Spirit of Truth,' not as if He brought new truth. To suppose that He does so, opens the door to all manner of fanaticism, but the truth, the revelation of which is all summed and finished in the person and work of Jesus Christ, is the weapon by which the divine Spirit works all His conquests, the staff on which He makes us lean and be strong. He is the Spirit by whom the truth passes into our personal possession, by no mere imperfect form of outward teaching which is always confused and insufficient, but by the inward teaching that deals with our hearts and our spirits.

But Christ speaks, too, of the blind world. There is a tone of deep sadness in His words. The thought of the immense multitude of men who were incapacitated to receive this Strengthener steals across and casts a momentary shadow upon even the brightness and greatness of His promise. 'The world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.' The 'world' is the mass of man, considered as godless and separate from Him, and there is a bit of the world in us all; but there are men who are wholly under its influence and dominion. And these men, says Christ, are perfectly incapable of receiving the teaching of this divine Comforter. Of course there are other operations of that Great Spirit of which we shall have to hear as we go on further in this context, in which His work 'convicts the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.' But what our Lord is speaking of here is the work of that Spirit who comes in response to His prayer which rises in consequence of our obedience, and who, coming, brings with Him strength and purity and peace and wisdom; and that aspect of His operations a heart that is all full and seething with the world is unfit to receive. It cannot see Him. Embruted natures are altogether incapacitated for high thoughts, for the perception of natural beauty, for the appreciation of art; and worldly men, by the very same law, are incapable of receiving this divine Spirit. A savage stares at the sunshine and sees nothing but a glare. And worldly men—that is to say, men whose tastes, inclinations, desires, hopes, purposes, strivings, are all bound by this visible diurnal round—lack the organ that enables them to see that divine Spirit moving round about them. Whether you have put your eyes out by fleshly lusts, or, as many men in this generation have done, by intellectual self-sufficiency and conceit, if the world, in its grosser or in its most refined forms, is your master, you are stone blind to all the best realities of the universe, and you cannot see the things that are. If you look out upon the history of the Church, or upon the present condition of Christendom, and say, 'I see no divine Spirit working there'; well, then, the only thing that is to be said to you is, 'Go to an oculist; your sight is bad. Perhaps there is solid land, as some of us see it, where you see only mist.' This generation needs the preaching of a supernatural power at work beside us, and among us, and until we come to believe *that*, we do not understand the fullness of Christ's gift.

III. Then, lastly, note the recipient disciples.

Observe that the order of clauses is reversed in the last part of the text. The world cannot receive, because it does not know. The disciple knows, because he receives. Possession and knowledge reciprocally interchange places, and may be regarded as cause and effect of one another. That is to say, at bottom they are one and the same thing. Knowledge is

possession, and possession is the only knowledge. These disciples knew Christ in a fashion. He had just been telling them that they did not know Him; but so far as they did dimly grasp Him, they saw the Spirit—in another form, indeed, than they would hereafter see—but still truly, though imperfectly. Beholding the Spirit, though 'through a glass darkly,' and cherishing their partial possession of Him, they will come to more, and steadfastly increase from the morning's twilight to the midday glory. So He says: 'He dwelleth with you' now, and 'He shall be *in* you' hereafter. There is a better form of possession opening before them, which came at Pentecost, and has lasted ever since. From thenceforward we have a Spirit that not only stands by our sides and holds fellowship with us (for the two 'withs' of our text are two different words, expressing respectively proximity and communion), but who actually dwells in the central depths of our natures, and whom we thus possess more perfectly and blessedly than is possible to even the closest outward proximity, and the sweetest outward fellowship.

That possession of an abiding and indwelling Spirit is the gift of Christ to every Christian soul, and is to be found by us all upon the path so plainly marked out in our text and its connections—'believe,' 'love,' 'obey.' Then the Dove of God will flutter down upon our heads and nestle in our hearts, and brooding over the solemn and solitary sea of our chaotic spirits, will bring up from it a new world glistening in fresh order and beauty, and 'very good' in its Maker's eyes.

THE ABSENT PRESENT CHRIST

'I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also.'—JOHN xiv. 18,19.

The sweet and gracious comfortings with which Christ had been soothing the disciples' fears went very deep, but hitherto they had not gone deep enough. It was much that they should know the purpose of His going, whither He went, and that they had an interest in His departure. It was much that they should have before them the prospect of reunion; much that they should know that all through His absence He would be working in them, and that they should be assured that, absent, He would send them a great gift. But reunion, influence from afar, and gifts from the other side of the gulf were not all that their hearts needed. And so here our Lord gives yet more, in the paradoxes that, absent He will be present, unseen visible, and dying will be for them for ever, living and life-giving. These great thoughts go to the centre of their needs and of ours; and on them I now touch briefly.

There are then in the words I have read, though they be but a fragment of a closely-linked-together context, these three great thoughts: the absent Christ the present Christ; the unseen Christ the seen Christ; the Christ who dies the living and life-giving Christ. Let us look at these as they stand.

I. First, then, the absent Christ is the present Christ.

'I will not leave you comfortless,' or, as the Revised Version has it, 'desolate—I come to you.' Now, most of us know, I suppose, that the literal meaning of the word rendered 'comfortless,' or 'desolate,' is '*orphans*.' But that is rather an unusual form in which to represent the relation between our Lord and His disciples, and so, possibly, our versions are accurate in giving the general idea of desolation rather than the specific idea conveyed directly by the word. But still it is to be remembered that this whole conversation begins with 'Little children'; and there seems to be no strong reason for suppressing the literal meaning of the word, if only it be remembered that it is employed not so much to define Christ's relation to his brethren as to describe the comfortless and helpless condition of that little group when left by Him. They would be like fatherless and motherless children in a cold world. And what is to hinder that? One thing only. 'I come to you.' 'Then, and only then, will you cease to be desolate and orphans. My presence will change everything and turn winter into glorious summer.'

Now, what is this 'coming'? It is to be observed that our Lord says, not 'I will,' as a future, but 'I come,' or 'I am coming,' as an immediately impending, and, we may almost say, present, thing. There can be no reference in the word to that final coming to judgment which lies so far ahead; because, if there were, then there would follow from the text, that, until that period, all that love Him here upon earth are to wander about as orphans, desolate and forsaken; and that certainly can never be. So that we have to recognise here the promise of a coming which is contemporaneous with His absence, and which is, in fact, but the reverse side of His bodily absence.

It is true about Him that He 'departs from' His people in bodily form 'for a season, that they may receive Him' in a better form 'for ever.' This, then, is the heart and centre of the consolation here, that howsoever the external presence may be withdrawn, and the 'foolish senses' may have to speak of an absent Christ, we may rejoice in the certainty that He is with all those that love Him, and all the more with them because of the very withdrawal of the earthly manifestation which has served its purpose, and now is laid aside as an impediment rather than as a help to the full communion. We confound *bodily* with *real*. The bodily presence is at an end; the real presence lasts for ever.

I do not need to insist, I suppose, upon the manifest implication of absolute divinity which lies in such words as these. 'I come.' 'Being absent, I am present in all generations. I am present with every single heart.' That is equivalent to the Omnipresence of deity; that is equivalent to or implies the undying existence of the divine nature, and He that says, when He is leaving earth and withdrawing the sweetness of His visible form from the eyes of men, 'I come,' in the very act of going, 'and I am with you always, with all of you to the end of the ages,' can be no less than God, manifest in the flesh for a time, and present in the Spirit with His children for ever.

I cannot but think that the average Christian life of this day wofully fails in the simple, conscious realisation of this great truth, and that we are all far too little living in the calm, happy, strengthening assurance that we are never alone, but have Jesus Christ with each of us more closely, more truly, in a more available fashion, and with more omnipotence of influence, than they had who were nearest Him during the days that He lived upon earth.

Oh, brethren! if we really believed, not as an article of our creed which has become so familiar to us that it produces little impression upon us, but as a vital and ever-present conviction of our souls, that with us there was ever the real presence of the real Christ, how all burdens and cares would be lightened, how all perplexities would begin to smooth themselves out and be straightened, how all the force would be sucked out of temptations, and how sorrows and joys and all things would be changed in their aspect by that one conviction intensely realised and constantly with us! A present Christ is the Strength, the Righteousness, the Peace, the Joy, and as we shall see, in the most literal sense, the Life of every Christian soul.

Then, note, further, that this coming of our Lord is identified with that of His divine Spirit. He has been speaking of sending that 'other Comforter,' but though He be Another, He is yet so indissolubly united with Him who sends as that the coming of the Spirit is the coming of Jesus. He is no gift wafted to us as from the other side of a gulf, but by reason of the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of the sent Spirit, Jesus Christ and the Spirit whom He sends are inseparable though separate, and so indissolubly united that where the Spirit is, there is Christ, and where Christ is, there is the Spirit. These are amongst the deep things which the disciples were 'not able to carry' at that stage of their development, and which waited for a further explanation. Enough for them and enough for us, to know that we have Christ in the Spirit and the Spirit in Christ; and to remember 'that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.'

We stand here on the margin of a shoreless and fathomless sea; and for my part I venture to think that the men who talk about the incredibilities and the contradictions of the

orthodox faith would show themselves a little wiser if they were more conscious of the limitation of human faculty, and remembered that to pronounce upon contradictions in the doctrine of the divine Nature implies that the pronouncer stands above and goes round about the whole of that nature. So, for my part, abjuring omniscience and the comprehension of Deity, I accept the statement that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit come together and dwell in the heart.

Then, note, further, that this present Christ is the only Remedy for the orphanhood of the world. The words had a tender and pathetic reference to that little, bewildered group of followers, deprived of their Guide, their Teacher, and their Companion. He who had been as eyes to their weak vision, and Counsellor and Inspirer and everything for three blessed years, was going away to leave them unsheltered to the storm, and we can understand how forlorn and terrified they were, when they looked forward to fronting the things that must come to them, without His presence. Therefore He cheers them with the assurance that they will not be left without Him, but that, present still, just because He is absent, He will be all that He ever had been to them.

And the promise was fulfilled. How did that dis-spirited group of cowardly men ever pluck up courage to hold together at all after the Crucifixion? Why was it that they did not follow the example of John's disciples, and dissolve and disappear; and say, 'The game is up. It is no use holding together any longer'? The process of separation began on the very day of the Crucifixion. Only one thing could have stopped it, and that is the Resurrection and the presence with His Church of the risen Christ in His power and in all the fullness of His gifts. If it had not been that He came to them, they would have disappeared, and Christianity would have been one more of the abortive sects forgotten in Judaism. But, as it is, the whole of the New Testament after Pentecost is aflame with the consciousness of a present Christ, working amongst His people. And although it be true that, in one aspect, we are absent from the Lord when we are present with the body, in another aspect, and an infinitely higher one, it is true that the strength of the Christian life of Apostles and martyrs was this, the assurance that Christ Himself—no mere rhetorical metaphor for His influence or His example, or His memory lingering in their imaginations, but the veritable Christ Himself—was present with them, to strengthen and to bless.

That same conviction you and I must have, if the world is not to be a desert and a dreary place for us. In a very profound sense it is true that if you take away Jesus Christ, the elder Brother, who alone reveals to men the Father, we are all orphans, fatherless children, who look up into an empty heaven and see nothing there. It is only Christ who reveals to us the Father and makes our happy hearts feel that we are of His children. And in the wider sense of the word 'orphans,' is not life a desolation without Him? Hollow joys, fleeting blessednesses, roses whose thorns last long after the petals have dropped, real sorrows, shows and shams, bitternesses and disappointments—are not these our life, in so far as Christ has been driven out of it? Oh! there is only one thing that saves us from being as desolate, fatherless children, groping in the dark for the lost Father's hand, and dying for want of it, and that is that the Christ Himself shall come to us and be with us.

II. The unseen Christ is a seen Christ.

It is clear that the period referred to in the second clause of our text is the same as that referred to in the first, that 'yet a little while' covers the whole space up to His Ascension; and that if there be any reference at all to the forty days of His earthly life, during which literally, the work 'saw Him no more,' but the Apostles 'saw Him,' that reference is only secondary. These transitory appearances are not of sufficient moment or duration to bear the weight of so great a promise as this. The vision, which is the consequence of the coming, has the same extension in time as the coming—that is to say, it is continuous and permanent. We must read here the great promise of a perpetual vision of the present Christ.

It is clear, too, that the word 'see' is employed in these two clauses in two different senses. In the former it refers only to bodily sight, in the latter to spiritual perception. For a few short hours still, the ungodly mass of men were to have that outward vision which might have been so much to them, but which they had used so badly that 'they seeing saw not.' It was to cease, and they who loved Him would not miss it when it did; but the withdrawal which hid Him from sense and sense-bound souls would reveal Him more clearly to His friends. They, too, had but dimly seen Him while He stood by them; they would gaze on Him with truer insight when He was present though absent.

So this is what every Christian life may and should be—the continual sight of a continually-present Christ. It is His part to come. It is ours to see, to be conscious of Him who does come.

Faith is the sight of the soul, and it is far better than the sight of the senses. It is more direct. My eye does not touch what I look at. Gulfs of millions of miles may lie between me and it. But my faith is not only eye, but hand, and not only beholds, but grasps, and comes into contact with that to which it is directed. It is far more clear. Sense may deceive; faith, built upon His Word, cannot deceive. Its information is far more certain, far more valid. I have better reason for believing in Jesus Christ than I have for believing in the things that I touch and handle. So that there is no need for men to say, 'Oh, if we had only seen Him with our eyes!' You would very likely not have known Him if you had. There is no reason for thinking that the Church has retrograded in its privileges, because it has to love instead of beholding, and to believe instead of touching. That is advance, and we are better than they, inasmuch as the blessing of those 'who have not seen, and yet have believed,' comes down upon our heads. The vision of Christ which is granted to the faithful soul is better and not worse, more and not less, other in kind indeed, but loftier in degree too, than that which was granted to the men who saw Him upon earth. Sense disturbs, faith alone beholds.

'The world seeth Me no more.' Why? Because it is a world. 'Ye see Me.' Why? Because, and in the measure in which you have turned away your eyes from seeing vanity. If you want the eye of the soul to be opened, you must shut the eye of sense. And the more we turn away from looking at the dazzling lies with which time and the material universe befool and bewilder us, the more shall we see Him whom to see is to live for ever.

Oh, brethren! does that strong word 'see' in any measure express the vividness, the directness, the certainty of our realisation of our Master's presence? Is Jesus Christ as clear, as perceptible, as sure to us as the men round us are? Which are the shadows and which are the realities to us? The things which are seen, which the senses crown as 'real,' or the

things which cannot be seen because they are so great, and tower above us, invisible in their eternity? Which world are our eyes most open to, the world where Christ is, or the world here? Our happy eyes may behold and our blessed hands may handle the Word of Life which was manifested to us. Let us beware that we turn not away from the one thing worthy to be looked at, to gaze upon a desolate and dreary world.

III. Lastly, the present and seen Christ is living and life-giving.

The last words of my text may be connected with the preceding, as the marginal rendering of the Revised Version shows. But it is probably better to take them as standing independently, and presenting another and co-ordinate element of the blessedness arising from the coming of the Christ. Because He comes, His life passes into the hearts of the men to whom He comes, and who gaze upon Him.

Time forbids me to dwell upon that majestic proclamation of His own absolute and divine life, from lips that were so soon to be paled with death. Mark the grand 'I live'—the timeless present tense, which expresses unbroken, underived, undying, and, as I believe, divine life. It is all but a quotation of the great Old Testament name 'Jehovah.' The depth and sweep of its meaning are given to us in this Apostle's Apocalypse, where Christ is called 'the living One,' who lived whilst He died, and having died 'is alive for evermore.'

And this Christ, coming to all His friends, possessor of the fullness of life in Himself, and proclaiming His absolute possession of that life, even whilst He stands within arm's-length of Calvary, is Life-giver to all that love Him and trust Him.

We live *because* He lives. In all senses of the word 'life,' as I believe, the life of men is derived from the Christ who is the Agent of creation, the channel from whom life passes from the Godhead into the creatures, and who is also the one means by whom any of us can ever hope to live the better life which is the only true one, and consists in fellowship with God and union to Him.

We shall live *as long as* He lives, and His being is the pledge and the guarantee of the immortal being of all who love Him. Anything is possible, rather than that it should be credible that a soul, which has drawn spiritual life from Jesus Christ here upon earth, should ever be rent apart from Him by such a miserable and external trifle as the mere dissolution of the bodily frame. As long as Christ lives our life is secure. If the Head has life, the members 'cannot see corruption,' 'Take *me* not away in the midst of my days: *Thy* years are throughout all generations' was the prayer of a saint of old, deeply feeling the contrast of the worshipper's transiency and God's eternity, and dimly hoping that the contrast might be changed into likeness. The great promise of our text answers the prayer, and assures us that the worshipper is to live as long as does He whom He adores.

We shall live as He lives, nor ever cease the appropriation of His being until all His life we know, and all its fullness has expanded our natures—and that will be never. Therefore we shall not die.

Men's lives have been prolonged by the transfusion of blood from vigorous frames. Jesus Christ passes His own blood into our veins and makes us immortal. The Church chose for one of its ancient emblems of the Saviour the pelican, which fed its young, according to the fable, with blood from its own breast. So Christ vitalises us. He in us is our Life.

Brethren, without Jesus Christ we are orphans in a fatherless world. Without Him, our wearied and yet unsatisfied eyes have only trifles and trials and trash to look at. Without Him, we are 'dead whilst we live.' He and He only can give us back a Father, and renew in us the spirit of sons. He and only He can satisfy our eyes with the sight which is purity and restfulness and joy. He and He only can breathe life into our death. Oh! let Him do it for you. He comes to us with all these gifts in His hands, for He comes to give us Himself, and in Himself, as 'in a box where sweets compacted lie,' are all that lonely hearts and wearied eyes and dead souls can ever need. All are yours if you are Christ's. All are yours if He is yours. And He is yours if by faith and love you make yourself His and Him your own.

THE GIFTS OF THE PRESENT CHRIST

'At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.'—JOHN xiv. 20, 21.

We have heard our Lord in the previous verse unveiling His deepest and strongest encouragements to His downcast followers. These were: His presence with them, their true sight of Him, and their participation in His life. The first part of our present text is closely connected with these, for it gives us their upshot and consequence. Because Christ's true disciple is conscious of Christ's presence, sees Him with the eyes of his spirit, and draws life from Him, therefore he will know by experience the deep truths of Christ's indwelling at once in the Father and in His servant, and of His servant's indwelling in Him. Our Lord had just previously been exhorting His disciples to *believe* that He was in the Father and the Father in Him; and had been gently wondering at the slowness of their faith. Now He tells them that, when He is gone, their spiritual stature will be so increased as that they shall *know* the thing which, with Him by their side, they found it so hard to believe.

The second part of our present text is the close of this whole section of our Lord's discourse, and in it He urges the requirement of practical obedience, as the sign and test of love, and as the condition of receiving these high and wonderful things of which He has been speaking. He has been unveiling spiritual blessings, which may seem recondite and up in the clouds, and which, as a matter of fact, have often been perverted into dreamy mysticisms of a most immoral and unpractical kind. And so He brings us sharp back again here to very plain truths, and would teach us that all these lofty and ineffable gifts of which He has been dimly speaking are to be reached only by the commonplace road of honest obedience and simple conformity to His commandments. In these last words of my text, He administers the antidote and the check to the possible abuses of the great things which He has been saying.

I. Note, then, first, the knowledge that comes with the Christ who comes.

'At that day' covers the whole period of which He has been speaking, between His withdrawal from the disciples and His final corporeal coming to judgment—that great day of which generations are but the moments. In it the men who love Him are to have His presence, His vision, His life, and because they have, 'Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you,' The principle that underlies these wonderful words is that Christian experience is the best teacher of fundamental Christian truth. Observe with what decision, and with what strange boldness, our Lord carries that principle into regions where we might suppose at first sight that it was altogether inapplicable. 'Ye shall know that I am in My Father.' How can such a thing as the relation between Christ and God ever be a matter of consciousness to us here upon earth? Must it not always be a truth that we must take on trust and believe because we have been told it, without having any

verification in ourselves? Not so; remember what has gone before. If a man has the consciousness of Christ's presence with Him, sees Him with the true inward eye, which is the only real organ of real vision, and is drawing from Him, moment by moment, His own high and immortal life, then is it not true that this man's experiences are of such a sort as to be utterly inexplicable, except on the ground that they come from a divine source? If I have these experiences I know that it is Jesus Christ who gives them, and I know that He could not give them, if He did not dwell in God and were not divine. These new influences, this revolution in my being, this healing, constraining, cleansing touch, these calming, gladdening, elevating powers, these new hopes, these reversed desires, loving all to which I was formerly indifferent, and growing dead to all that formerly appealed most strongly to me; all these things bear upon their very front the signature that they are wrought by a divine hand, and as sure as I am of my own Christian consciousness, so sure am I that all its experiences proclaim their Author, and that Christ who gives me them is in God. 'Ye shall know that I am in My Father.'

The New Testament, as I read it, is full at every point of the divinity of Jesus Christ; and many profound and learned arguments on that subject have been urged by theologians, and these are all well and needful in their places, but the true way to be sure of it is to have Him dwelling with us and working in us; and then what was an article of belief becomes an article of knowledge, and we know Him to be our Saviour and the Son of God.

In like manner, and yet more obviously, the other elements of this knowledge which Christ promises here may be shown to flow naturally and necessarily from Christian experiences. 'That ye are in Me, and I in you,'—if a Christian man carries the consciousness of Christ's presence, and has Him as a Sun in his darkness, and as a Life-source feeding his deadness with life, then he knows with a consciousness which is irrefragable that Jesus Christ is in him, for he feels His touch; and he knows that he is in Christ, for he is aware of the power that girdles him, and in which he has peace and righteousness and all.

So, dear brethren, let us learn what the Christian man's experience ought to be and to do for him. It should change the articles of our creed into elements of our consciousness. It should make all the fundamentals of the Gospel vitally and vividly true; and certified by what has passed within our own spirits We should be able to say: 'We have the witness in ourselves.' And though there will remain much that is uncertain, much in Christian doctrine which is not capable of that clear and all-sufficing verification; much about which we must still depend on the mere teaching of others, or on our own study, the central facts which make the Gospel may all become, by this plain and short path, elements of our very consciousness which stand undeniable to us, whosoever denies them.

Such a direct way to knowledge is reasonable, is in full analogy with the manner by which we attain to the knowledge of everything except the mere external facts, the knowledge of which has arrogated to itself the exclusive name of 'science,' How do you know anything about love? You may read poems and tragedies to the end of time, and you will not understand it until you come under its spell for yourself; and then all the things that men said about it cease to be mere words, because you yourself have experienced the emotion.

'He must be loved, ere that to you
He will seem worthy of your love,'

and the only way to be sure, with a vital certitude, of Christ, is to take Christ for your very own, and then He comes into your very being, and dwells there quickening, the Sun and the Life.

So, dear brethren, though such certitude arising from experience, which in its nature is the very highest, is not available for other people, the fact that so many millions of men allege that in varying degrees they possess this certitude is available for other people, and there is nothing to be said by the unbeliever to this, the attestation of the Christian consciousness to the truth of the truths which it has tried. 'Whether this man be a sinner or no, I know not.' You may jangle as much as you like about the questionable and controversial points that surround the Christian revelation, I do not care in the present connection what answer you give to them. 'Whether this man be a sinner or no, I know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' And we may push the war into the enemy's quarters, and say: 'Why! herein is a marvellous thing, that you that know everything do not know whence this man is, and yet He has opened mine eyes. You want facts; there are some. You want verification; we have verified by experience, and we set to our seals that God is true.'

'Oh but,' you say, 'this is not a fair account of the way in which Christian men and women generally feel about this matter.' Well, all that I can say about that is, so much the worse for the so-called Christian men and women. And if they are Christians, and do not know by this inward experience that Christ is divine and their Saviour, then there is only one of two reasons to be given for it; either their experience is so wretchedly superficial and fragmentary, so rudimentary as to be scarcely worth calling by the name or, having the facts, they have failed to appreciate their significance, and to make their own by reflection the certitudes which are their own.

Brethren, it becomes every Christian man and woman to be able to say, 'Because I have Christ with me, and see Him, and derive my life from Him, I know that He is in the Father, and I in Him, and He in me.' And if you cannot say that, it is your own grasp of Him, or your meditation upon what you have got by your grasp, that is painfully and sinfully defective.

II. My text speaks of the obedience which is the sign and test of love.

The words here are substantially equivalent to former words in the chapter which we have already considered, where our Lord says: 'If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments.'

There is, however, a slight difference in the point of view in the two sayings; the former begins with the root and traces it upwards and outwards to its fruits, love blossoming into obedience. Our text reverses the process, and takes the thing by the other end; begins with the fruits and traces them downwards and inwards to the root. 'He that hath and keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me.' The two sayings substantially mean the same thing; but in the one love is put first as the cause of obedience, and in the other obedience is put first, as the certain fruit and sure sign of love. The connection between these and the preceding words is, as I have already pointed out, that our Lord here brings all His lofty

promises down to the sharp, practical requirement of obedience, as the only condition on which they can be fulfilled.

So note, and very briefly about this matter, how remarkably our Lord here declares the *possession* of His commandments to be a sign of love to Him. 'He that *hath*,' a word which is generally passed over in our reading—'He that hath My commandments, He it is that loveth Me.' Of course there are two ways of having His commandments; there is having them in the Bible, and there is having them in the heart;—present before my eye, as a law that I ought to obey, or present within my will, as a power that shapes it. And the latter is the only kind of 'having' that Christ regards as real and valid. The rest is only preparatory and superficial. Love possesses the knowledge of the loved one's will. Is not that true? Do we not all know how strange is the power of divining desires that goes along with true affection, and how the power, not only of divining, but of treasuring, these desires is the test and the thermometer of our true love? Some of us, perhaps, keep laid away in sacred, secret places tattered, yellow, old bits of paper with the words of a dear one on them, that we would not part with. 'He that hath My commandments' laid up in lavender in the deepest recesses of his faithful heart, he it is 'that loveth Me.'

In like manner, our Lord says, the practical obedience to His commandments is the sure sign and test of love. I need not dwell upon that. There are two motives for keeping commandments—one because they are commanded, and one because we love Him that commands. The one is slavery, the other is liberty. The one is like the Arctic regions, cold and barren, the other is like tropical lands, full of warmth and sunshine, glorious and glad fertility.

The form of the sentence suggests how easy it is for people to delude themselves about their love to Jesus Christ. That emphatic 'he,' and the putting first of the character before its root is pointed out, are directed against false pretensions to love. The love that Christ stamps with His hall-mark, and passes as genuine, is no mere emotion, however passionate, however sweet; no mere sentiment, however pure, however deep. The tiniest little rivulet that drives a mill is better than a Niagara that rushes and foams and tumbles idly. And there is much so-called love to Jesus Christ that goes masquerading up and down the world, from which the paint is stripped by the sharp application of the words of my text. Character and conduct are the true demonstrations of Christian love, and it is only love so attested that He accepts.

III. Lastly, notice the further and sweeter gifts of divine love and manifestation which reward our love and obedience.

'He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.' Two things, then, He tells us, are the rich rewards and sparkling crowns with which He crowns our poor love to Him—the love of the Father and the love of the Christ, separate and yet united, and the further manifestation of Christ's sweetness to the waiting heart.

Note, as to the first, the extraordinary boldness of that majestic saying: 'If a man loves *Me*, My Father will love *him*.' God regards our love to Jesus Christ as the fulfilling of the law, as equivalent to our supreme love to Himself, as containing in it the germ of all that is pleasing in His sight. And so, upon our hearts, if we love Christ, there falls the benediction

of the Father's love. Of course I need not remind you that our Lord here is not beginning at the very beginning of everything; for prior to all men's love to Christ is Christ's love to men, and ours to Him is but the reflection and the echo called forth by His to us. 'We love Him because He first loved us' digs a story deeper down in the building than the words of my text, which is speaking, not of the process by which a man comes to receive the love of God for the first time, but of the process by which a Christian man grows in his possession of it. That being understood, here is a great lesson. It is not all the same to God whether a man is a scoundrel or a saint. The divine love is over all its works, and embraces every variety of humanity, the most degraded, alien, hostile. But in this generation, as it seems to me, there is great need for preaching that whilst that is gloriously and blessedly true, the other thing is just as true, that to know the deepest depth and to taste the sweetest sweetness of the love of our Father God, there must be in our hearts love to Him whom He has sent, which manifests itself by our obedience. God's love is a moral love; and whilst the sunbeams play upon the ice and melt it sometimes, they flash back from, and rest most graciously and fully on, the rippling stream into which the ice has turned. God loves them that love Him not, but the depths of His heart and the secret, sacred favours of His grace can only be bestowed upon those who in some measure are conformed, and are growingly being conformed, to His likeness in Jesus Christ, and who love Him and obey Him.

And, in like manner, my text tells us that if we wish to know all that it is possible for us here, amidst the clouds, and shadows, and darknesses, to know of that dear Lord, the path to such knowledge is plain. Walk in the way of obedience, and Christ will meet you with the unveiling of more and more of His love. To live what we believe is the sure way to increase its amount. To be faithful to the little is the certain way to inherit the much. And Christ manifests Himself, in all deep and recondite sweetness, gentleness, constraining power, to the men who treasure the partial knowledge as yet possessed, in their loving hearts and obedient wills, and who make a conscience of translating all their knowledge into conduct, and of basing all their conduct on knowledge of Him. He gives us His whole self at the first, but we traverse the breadth of the gift by degrees. He puts Himself into our hands and into our hearts when we humbly trust Him and imperfectly try to love Him. But the flower is but a bud when we get it, and, as we hold it, it opens its petals to the light.

So, if 'any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine'; and if, touched by His divine love and infinite sacrifice for me, I cast my poor self upon Him, and try to love Him back again, and to keep His commandments because I love, then day by day I shall realise more and more of His strong, immortal, all-satisfying love, and see more and more deeply into that Saviour, whose infinite beauties remain unrevealed after all revelation, and to know more and more of whom shall be the Heaven of Heavens yonder, as it is the joy and life of the soul here.

WHO BRING CHRIST

'Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me.'—JOHN xiv. 22-24.

This Judas held but a low place amongst the Apostles. In all the lists he is one of the last of the groups of fours, into which they are divided, and which were evidently arranged according to their spiritual nearness to the Master. His question is exactly that which a listener, with some dim, confused glimmer of Christ's meaning, might be expected to ask. He grasps at His last words about manifesting Himself to certain persons; he rightly feels that he and his brethren possess the qualification of love. He rightly understands that our Lord contemplates no public showing of Himself, and that disappoints him. It was only a day or two ago that Jesus seemed to them to have begun to do what they had always wanted Him to do, manifest Himself to the world. And now, as he thinks, something unknown to them must have happened in order to make Him change His course, and go back to the old plan of a secret communication. And so he says, 'Lord! what has come to pass to induce you to abandon and falter upon the course on which we entered, when you rode into Jerusalem with the shouting crowd?'

His question is no better in intelligence, though it is a great deal better in spirit, than the taunt of Christ's brethren, 'If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.' Judas, too, thought of the simple flashing of His Messianic glory, in some visible, vulgar form, before else blind eyes.

How sad and chilling such a question must have been to Jesus! Slow scholars we all are; and with what wonderful patience, without a word of pain, or of rebuke, He reiterates His lesson, here a little and there a little, and once more unfolds the conditions of His self-revelation, and the fullness of the blessings that He brings. He moulds His words so as to meet both the clauses of Judas's foolish question—'To us, not to the world'; and quietly tells them the positive conditions and the negative disqualifications for His self-revelation. So my text deals with two things, the crown of loving obedience in the possession of a fuller Christ, and the impassable barrier to His manifestation which unloving disobedience makes. Or to put it into briefer words, we have in one of the verses—first, what brings Christ and what Christ brings; and, in the other, second, what keeps away Christ and all His gifts. Now let us look at these two things.

I. We have what brings Christ and what Christ brings.

'If a man love Me, He will keep My word' (not 'words,' as our Authorised Version has it), 'and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.' Now notice how here, in the first part of this verse, our Lord subtly and significantly alters the form of the statement which He has already made. He had formerly said, 'If ye love Me,

ye will keep My commandments,' but now He casts it into a purely impersonal form, and says, 'If a man,' anybody, not 'you' only, but anybody—'If a man love Me, he,' anybody, 'will keep My word.' And why the change? Why, I suppose, in order to strike full and square against that complacent assumption of Judas that it was 'to us and not to the world' that the showing was to take place. Our Lord, by the studiously impersonal form into which He casts the promise, proclaims its universality, and says this to His ignorant questioner, 'Do not suppose that you Apostles have the monopoly. You may not even have a share in My self-manifestation. Anybody may have it. And there is no "world," as you suppose, to which I do not show Myself. Anybody may have the vision if he observes the conditions.'

Now I need not dwell at any length upon the earlier words of this text, because we have had to consider them in previous sermons on the former verses of this chapter. I need only remark that here, as there, our Lord brings out the thought that the very life-blood of love is the treasuring of the word of the beloved One; and that there is no joy comparable to the joy of the loving heart that yields itself to the Beloved's will. That is true about earth, and it makes the sweetest and selectest blessedness of our ordinary existence. And it is true about heaven, and it makes the liberty and the gladness of the bond that knits us to Him.

But I would like just to notice, before I come to the more immediate subject of my discourse, that remarkable expression, 'He will keep My *word*.' That is more than a 'commandment' is it not? Christ's 'word' is wider than *precept*. It includes all His sayings, and it includes them all as in one vital unity and organic whole. We are not to go picking and choosing among them; they are one. And it includes this other thought, that every word of Christ, be it revelation of the deep things of God, or be it a promise of the great shower of blessings which, out of His full hand, He will drop upon our heads, enshrines within itself a commandment. He utters no revelations, simply that we may know. He utters no comforting words, simply that our sore hearts may be healed, but in all His utterances there is a practical bearing; and every word of His teaching, every word of His sweet, whispered assurances of love and favour to the waiting heart, has in it the imperativeness of His manifested will, and has a direct bearing upon duty. All His *words* are gathered into one word, and all the variety of His sayings is, in their unity, the law of our lives. So much by way of observation on the mere language of my text. And now let us look at what, as He says to us here, are the rewards and crown of loving obedience.

Christ will show Himself to the loving heart. That is true on the very lowest level. Every act of obedience to any moral truth is rewarded by additional insight. Every act of submission to His will cleanses the lenses of the telescope from some film that has gathered upon them, and so the stars look brighter and larger and nearer. All duty done opens out into a loftier conception of duty, and a clearer vision of Him. 'To him that hath shall be given.' As we climb the hill we get a wider view. Obedience is in all things the parent of insight.

But in reference to our relation to Him, we have to do not with truths only, but with a Person. How do we learn to know people? There is only one way—that is, by loving them. Sympathy is the parent of all true knowledge of one another. They tell us in the foolish old proverb that 'love is blind.' No! There is not such a pair of clear eyes anywhere as the eyes of love; and if we want to see into a man, the first condition is that we feel kindly towards

him. Sympathy is the parent of insight into persons, as Obedience is the parent of insight into duty.

But both of these illustrations are only imperfect preparations for the great truth here, which is that our loving obedience to the discerned will of Jesus Christ has not only an operation inwards upon us, but has an effect outwards upon Him. I am afraid that Christian people in this generation have but a very imperfect belief in the actual, supernatural, and, if you like to call it so, miraculous manifestation of Jesus Christ, His very Self, to men that love Him and cleave to Him. Do you believe as a simple revealed truth, plain as a sunbeam in such words as these, that Jesus Christ Himself will do something on you, and in you, and for you, if you love Him and trust Him; that His hand will be laid on your eyes as it was laid of old; that He will indeed, in no metaphor, but in reality, show Himself to you? I may be mistaken, but I think that too commonly it is the case, that even good Christian people have a far more vivid and realising and real faith in the past work of Christ on earth than in the present work of Christ in themselves. They think the one a plain truth, and the other something like a metaphor, whereas the New Testament teaches us, as plainly as it can teach us anything, that, far above all the natural operations of truth upon our understandings, hearts, and wills, there is an actual, supernatural, continuous communication of Christ to hearts that love Him, which leads day by day, if they be faithful, to a fuller knowledge, a sweeter love, a larger possession, of a fuller Christ. And it is this that He tells us of, to fire our ambition to attain, in such words as these.

Brethren, one piece of honest, loving obedience is worth all the study and speculation of an unloving heart when the question is, 'How are we to see Christ?'

Again, Jesus shows Himself to the obedient heart in indissoluble union with the Father. Look at the majesty, and, except upon one hypothesis, the insane presumption, of such words as these: 'If a man love Me, My Father will love *him*'; as if identifying love to Christ with love to Himself. And look at that wondrous union, the consciousness of which speaks in '*We* will come.' Think of a *man* saying that. It is blasphemous insanity; or else the speech of Him who is conscious of union with the Father, close and indissoluble and transcending all analogies. '*We* will come,' together, hand-in-hand, if I may so say; or rather, His coming is the Father's coming. Just as in heaven so closely are they represented as united, that there is but one throne 'for God and the Lamb,' so on earth so closely are they represented as united, that there is but one coming of the Father in the Son.

And this is the only belief, as it seems to me, that will keep this generation from despair and moral suicide. The question for this generation is, Is it possible for men to know God? Science, both of material things and of inward experiences, is more and more unanimous in its proclamation; 'Behold! we know not anything'; and the only attitude to take before that great black vault above us is to say, 'We know nothing.' The world has learned half of a great verse of the Gospel: 'No man hath seen God at any time, nor can see Him.' If the world is not to go mad, if hearts are not to be tortured into despair, if morality and enthusiasm and poetry and everything higher and nobler than the knowledge of material phenomena and their sequences is not to perish from the earth, the world must learn the next half of the verse, and say, 'The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' Christ shows Himself in indissoluble union with the Father.

Lastly about this matter, Christ shows Himself to obedient love by a true coming. 'We will come and make our mansion with him.' And that coming is a fact of a higher order, and not to be confounded either with the mere divine Omnipresence, by which God is everywhere, nor to be reduced to a figment of our own imaginations, or a strong way of promising increased perception on our part of Christ's fullness. That great central Sun, if I might use so violent a figure, draws nearer and nearer and nearer to the planets that move about it, and having once been far off on an almost infinitely distant horizon, approaches until planet and Sun unite.

Dear brethren, if we could only get to the attitude of simple acceptance of this as a literal truth, and believe that, in prose reality, Christ comes to every heart that loves Him, would not all the world be different to us?

That coming is a permanent residence: 'We will make our abode with him.' Very beautiful is it to notice that our Lord here employs that same sweet and significant word, with which He began this wonderful series of encouragements, when He said, 'In My Father's house are many mansions.' Yonder they dwell for ever with God; here God in Christ for ever dwells with the loving heart. It is a permanent abode so long as the conditions are fulfilled, but only so long. If self-will, rising in the Christian heart from its torpor and apparent death, reasserts itself and shakes off Christ's yoke, Christ's presence vanishes. In the last hours of the Holy City there was heard by the trembling priests amidst the midnight darkness the motion of departing Deity, and a great voice said: 'Let us depart hence'; and to-morrow the shrine was empty, and the day after it was in flames. Brethren, if you would keep the Christ in whom is God, remember that He cannot be kept but by the act of loving obedience.

II. Now, in the next place, my text gives us the negative side, and shows us what keeps away Christ and all His blessings.

An unloving disobedience closes the eyes to the vision, and the heart against the entrance, of that dear Lord. Our Master lays down for us two principles, and leaves us to draw the conclusion for ourselves.

The first is, 'He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings.' No love, no obedience. That is plainly true, because the heart of all the commandments is love, and where that is not, disobedience to their very spirit is. It is plainly true, because there is no power that will lead men to true obedience to Christ's yoke except the power of love. His commandments are too alien from our nature ever to be kept, unless by the might of love. It was only the rising sunbeam that could draw music from the stony lips of Memnon, as he gazed out across the desert, and it is only when Christ's love shines on our faces that we open our lips in praise, and move our hands in service. Those great rocking-stones down in Cornwall stand unmoved by any tempest, but a child's finger, laid on the right place, will set them vibrating. And so the heavy, hard, stony bulk of our hearts lies torpid and immovable, until He lays His loving finger upon them, and then they rock at His will. There is no keeping of Christ's commandments without love. That makes short work of a great deal that calls itself Christianity, does it not? Reluctant obedience is no obedience; self-interested obedience is no obedience; constrained obedience is no obedience; outward acts of service, if the heart be wanting, are rubbish and dung. Morality without religion is nought. The one thing that

makes a good man is love to Jesus Christ; and where that is, there, and only there, is obedience.

'Talk they of morals? O Thou Bleeding Lamb!
The grand morality is love of Thee.'

'If a man love Me not, he will not keep My words.'

Then the second principle is, disobedience to Christ is disobedience to God. 'The Word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's.' Christ's consciousness of union so speaks out here as that He is quite sure that all His words are God's words, and that all God's words are spoken by Him. Paul has to say, 'So speak I, not the Lord.' And you would not think a man a very sound or safe religious teacher who said to you, to begin with, 'Now, mind, everything that I say, God says.' There are no errors then, no deterioration of the treasure by the vessel in which it lies. The water does not taste of the vase in which it is carried. The personality of Jesus Christ is never, through all His utterances, so separated from God but that God speaks in Him; and, listening to His voice, we hear the absolute utterance of the uncreated and eternal Wisdom.

Therefore follows the conclusion, which our Lord does not state, but leaves us to supply. If it be true that the absence of love of Him is disobedience to Him, and if it be true that disobedience to Him is disobedience to God, then it plainly follows that what keeps away Christ and all His gifts, and God in Him, is unloving obedience. What brings Him is the obedience of love; what repels Him is alienation and rebellion. If the heart be full of confusion, of the world, of self, of unbridled inclinations, of careless indifference to His bleeding love, He 'can but listen at the gate and hear the household jar within.'

And so, dear friends, from all this there follow one or two points, which I touch very briefly. One is, that it is possible for men not to see Christ, though He stands there close before them. It is possible to grope at noonday as at midnight, to see only 'bracken green and cold grey stone' on the hillside, where another man sees the chariots of fire and the horses of fire. It is possible for you—and, alas! it is the condition of some of my hearers—to look upon Christ and to turn away and say, 'I see no beauty in Him that I should desire Him,' whilst the man beside yon, looking at the same facts and the same face, can see in Him the 'Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.'

Another thought is, that Christ's showing of Himself to men is in no sense arbitrary. It is you that determine what you shall see. You can hermetically seal your heart against Him, you can blind yourself to all His beauty. The door of your hearts is hinged to open from within, and if you do not open it, it remains shut, and Christ remains outside.

Another thought is, that you do not need to do anything to blind yourselves. Simple negation is fatal. 'If a man love not'; that is all. The absence of love is your ruin.

And the last thought is this, that my text does not begin at the beginning. Jesus Christ has been speaking about manifestations of Himself to the loving and obedient; but there are manifestations of Himself made that we may *become* loving and obedient. You can build a barrier over which these sweeter revelations, of which loyal love and docile submission are the conditions, cannot rise. But you cannot build a barrier over which the prior revelations to the unthankful and disobedient cannot rise. No mountains of sin and neglect and alienation can be piled so high but that the flood of pardoning grace will rise above their

crests, and pour itself into your hearts. You ask, How can I get the love and obedience of which you have been singing the praises now? There is only one answer, brethren. We know that we love Him when we know that He loves us; and we know that He loves us when we see Him dying on His Cross. So here is the ladder, that is planted in the miry clay of the horrible pit, and fastens its golden hooks on His throne. The first round is, Behold the dying Christ and His love to me. The second is, Let that love melt my heart into sweet responsive love. The third is, Let my love mould my life into obedience. And then Christ, and God in Him, will come to me and show Himself to me; and give me a fuller knowledge and a deeper love, and make His dwelling with me. And then there is only one round still to roach, and that will land us by the Throne of God, in the many mansions of the Father's house, where we shall make our abode with Him for evermore.

THE TEACHER SPIRIT

'These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'—JOHN xiv. 25, 26.

This wonderful outpouring of consolation and instruction with which our Lord sought to soothe the pain of parting is nearing its end. We have to conceive of a slight pause here, whilst He looks back upon what He has been saying and contrasts His teaching with that of the Comforter, whom He has once already, though in a different connection, promised to His followers. He speaks of His earthly residence with them as being 'an abiding,' distinctly therein referring to what He has just said, that the Father and He will, in the future, 'make their abode' with His disciples. He contrasts the outward and transitory presence which was now nearing its end, with the inward and continuous presence, which its end was to inaugurate.

And, in like manner, with, at first sight, startling humility, He contrasts 'these things,' the partial and to a large extent unintelligible utterances which He had given with His human lips, with the complete, universal teaching of that divine Spirit, who was to instruct in 'all things' pertaining to man's salvation. We have then, here, sketched in broad outline, the great truths concerning the ever-present, inward Teacher of God's Church who is to come, now that the earthly manifestation of Christ, whom the twelve called their 'Teacher,' had reached a close. I think we may best gain the deep instruction which lies in the words before us, if we look at three points of view which they bring into prominence: the Teacher, His lesson, and His scholars.

I. Now, as to the first, the promised Teacher.

I need not repeat what I have said in former sermons as to the wide sweep of that word 'the Comforter,' beyond just reminding you that it means literally one who is called to the side of another, primarily for the purpose of being his representative in some legal process; and, more widely, for any purpose of help, encouragement, and strength. That being so, 'Comforter,' in its modern sense of *Consoler*, is far too narrow for the full force of the word, which means much rather 'Comforter,' in its ancient and etymological sense of one who, in company with another, makes Him strong and brave.

But the point to which I desire to turn attention now is this, that this comforting and strengthening office of the divine Spirit is brought into immediate connection here with the conception of Him as a Teacher. That is to say, the best strength that God, by His Spirit, can give us is by our firm grasp and growing clearness of understanding of the truths which are wrapped up in Jesus Christ. All power for endurance, for service, is there, and when the Spirit of God teaches a man what God reveals in Christ, He therein and thereby most fully discharges His office of Strengthener.

Then note still further the other designation of this divine Teacher which is here given: 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.' We might have expected, as indeed we find in another context in this great final discourse, the 'Spirit of *Truth*' as appropriate in connection with the office of teaching. But is there not a profound lesson for us here in this, that, side by side with the thought of illumination, there lies the thought of purity built upon consecration, which is the Scripture definition of holiness? That suggests that there is an indissoluble connection between the real knowledge of God's truth and practical holiness of life. That connection is of a double sort. There is no holiness without such knowledge, and there is no such knowledge without holiness.

There is no real knowledge of Christ and His truth without purity of heart. The man who has no music in his soul can never be brought to understand the deep harmonies of the great masters and magicians of sound. The man who has no eye for beauty can never be brought to bow his spirit before some of those embodiments of loveliness and sublimity which the painter's brush has cast upon the canvas. And the man who has no longings after purity, nor has attained to any degree of moral conformity with the divine image, is not in possession of the sense which is needed in order that he should understand the 'deep things of God.'

The scholars in this school have to wash their hands before they go to school, and come there with clean hands and clean hearts. Foulness and the love of it are bars to all understanding of God's truth. And, on the other hand, the truest inducements, motives, and powers for purity are found in that great word which is all 'according to godliness,' and is meant much rather to make us good than to make us wise.

So, in this designation of the teaching Spirit as holy, there lie lessons for two classes of people. All fanatical professions of possessing divine illumination, which are not warranted and sealed by purity of life, are lies or self-delusion. And, on the other hand, coldblooded intellectualism will never force the locks of the palace of divine truth, but they that come there must have clean hands and a pure heart; and only those who have the love and the longing for goodness will be wise scholars in Christ's school. Your theology is nothing unless its distinct outcome is morality, and you must be prepared to accept the painful, the punitive, the purifying influences of that divine Spirit on your moral natures if you want to have His enlightening influences shining on the 'truth as it is in Jesus.' 'If any man wills to do His will, he,' and only he, 'shall know of the doctrine.' Knowledge and holiness are as inseparable in divine things as light and heat.

And still further note that this great Teacher is 'sent by God' in Christ's name. That pregnant phrase, 'In My name,' cannot be represented by any one form of expression into which we may translate it, but covers a larger space. God in Christ's name sends the Spirit. That is to say, in some deep sense God acts as Christ's representative; just as Christ comes in the Father's name and acts as His representative. And, again, God sends in Christ's name; that is, the historical manifestation of Christ is the basis on which the sending of the Spirit is possible and rests. The revelation had to be complete before He who came to unfold the meaning of the revelation had material to work upon. The Spirit, which is sent in Christ's name, has, for the basis of His mission, and the means by which He acts, the recorded facts of Christ's life and death, these and none other.

And then note finally about this matter, the strong and unmistakable declaration here, that that divine Spirit is a person: 'He shall teach you all things.' They tell us that the doctrine of the Trinity is not in the New Testament. The word is not, but the thing is. In this verse we have the Father, the Son, and the Spirit brought into such close and indissoluble union as is only vindicated from the charge of blasphemy by the belief in the divinity of each. Just as the Apostolic benediction, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit' necessarily involves the divinity of all who are thus invoked, so we stand here in the presence of a truth which pierces into the deeps of Deity. That divine Spirit is more than an influence. 'He shall teach,' and He can be grieved by evil and sin. I do not enlarge upon these thoughts. My purpose is mainly to bring them out clearly before you.

II. I pass in the second place to the consideration of the Lesson which this promised Teacher gives.

Mark the words, 'He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever *I* have said unto you.' Now as we have seen in the exposition of the words 'in My name,' the whole subject-matter of the divine Spirit's teaching is the life and work and death and person of Jesus Christ. 'He shall teach you all things' is wider than 'He shall bring all things which I have said to you to your remembrance.' But whilst that is so, the clear implication of the words before us is that Christ is the lesson book, of which the divine Spirit is the Teacher. His weapon, to take another metaphor, with which He plies men's hearts and minds and wills, convincing the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, and leading those who are convinced into deeper knowledge and larger wisdom, is the recorded facts concerning the life and manifestation of Jesus Christ. The significance of this lesson book, the history of our Lord, cannot be unfolded all at once. There is something altogether unique in the incorruption and germinant power of all His deeds and of all His words. This Carpenter of Nazareth has reached the heights which the greatest thinkers and poets of the past have never reached, or only in little snatches and fragments of their words. *His* words open out, generation after generation, into undreamed-of wisdom, and there are found to be hived in them stores of sweetness that were never suspected until the occasion came that drew them forth. The world and the Church received Christ, as it were, in the dark; and, as with some man receiving a precious gift as the morning was dawning, each fresh moment revealed, as the light grew, new beauties and new preciousness in the thing possessed. So Christ, in His infinite significance, fresh and new for all generations, was given at first, and ever since the Church and the world have been learning the meaning of the gift which they received. Christ's words are inexhaustible, and the Spirit's teaching is to unveil more and more of the infinite significance that lies in the apparently least significant of them.

Now, then, note that if this be our Lord's meaning here, Jesus Christ plainly anticipated that, after His departure from earth, there should be a development of Christian doctrine. We are often taunted with the fact, which is exaggerated for the purpose of controversy, that a clear and full statement of the central truths which orthodox Christianity holds, is found rather in the Apostolic epistles than in the Master's words, and the shallow axiom is often quoted with great approbation: 'Jesus Christ is our Master, and not Paul.' I do not grant that the germs and the central truths of the Gospel are not to be found in Christ's

words, but I admit that the full, articulate statement of them is to be found rather in the servant's letters, and I say that that is exactly what Jesus Christ told us to expect, that after He was gone, words that had been all obscure, and thoughts that had been only fragmentarily intelligible, would come to be seen clearly, and would be discerned for what they were. The earlier disciples had only a very partial grasp of Christ's nature. They knew next to nothing of the great doctrine of sacrifice; they knew nothing about His resurrection; they did not in the least understand that He was going back to heaven; they had but glimmering conceptions of the spirituality or universality of His Kingdom. Whilst they were listening to Him at that table they did not believe in the atonement; but they dimly believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ; they did not believe in His resurrection; they did not believe in His ascension; they did not believe that He was founding a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom was to rule over all the world till the end of time. None of these truths were in their mind. They had all been in germ in His words. And after He was gone, there came over them a breath of the teaching Spirit, and the unintelligible flashed up into significance. The history of the Church is the proof of the truth of this promise, and if anybody says to me, 'Where is the fulfilment of the promise of a Spirit that will bring all things to your remembrance?' I say—here in this Book! These four Gospels, these Apostolic Epistles, show that the word which our Lord here speaks has been gloriously fulfilled. Christ anticipated a development of doctrine, and it casts no slur or suspicion on the truthfulness of the apostolic representation of the Christian truths, that they are only sparsely and fragmentarily to be found in the records of Christ's life,

Then there is another practical conclusion from the words before us, on which I touch for a moment, and that is, that if Jesus Christ and the deep understanding of Him be the true lesson of the divine, teaching Spirit, then real progress consists, not in getting beyond Christ, but in getting more fully into Him. We hear a great deal in these days about advanced thought and progressive Christianity. I hope I believe in the continuous advance of Christian thought as joyfully as any man, but my notion of it—and I humbly venture to say Christ's notion of it—is to get more and more into His heart, and to find within Him, and not away from Him, 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' We leave all other great men behind. All other teachers' words become feeble by age, as their persons become ghostly, wrapped in thickening folds of oblivion; but the progress of the Church consists in absorbing more and more of Christ, in understanding Him better, and becoming more and more moulded by His influence. The Spirit's teaching brings out the ever fresh significance of the ancient and perpetual revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

III. And now, lastly, note the Scholars.

Primarily, of course, these are the Apostolic group but the Apostles, in all these discourses, stand as the representatives of the Church, and not as separated from it. And whilst the teaching Spirit could 'bring to the remembrance' of those only who first heard them 'the words that He said unto them,' that Spirit's teaching function is not limited to those who listened to the Lord Jesus. The fire that was kindled on Pentecost has not died down into grey ashes, nor the river that then broke forth been sucked up by thirsty sands of successive generations, but the fire is still with us, and the river still flows near our lips, and we, too, may be taught by that divine Spirit. For this very Evangelist, in writing his Epistle, has at least two distinct references to, and almost verbal quotations of, this

promise, when he says, addressing all his Asiatic brethren, 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.' And again, 'The unction which ye have of Him abideth with you, and ye need not that any man should teach you.'

So, then, Christian men and women, every believing soul has this divine Spirit for His Teacher, and the humblest of us may, if we will, learn of Him and be led by Him into profounder knowledge of that great Lord.

Oh! dear brethren, the belief in the actual presence with the Church of a Spirit that teaches all faithful members thereof, is far too much hesitatingly held by the common Christianity of this day. We ought to be the standing witnesses in the world of the reality of a supernatural influence, and how can we be, if we do not believe it ourselves, and never feel that we are under it?

But whilst a continuous inspiration from that self-same Spirit is the prerogative of all believing souls, let us not forget that the early teaching is the standard by which all such must be tried. As to the first disciples the office of the divine Spirit was to bring before them the deep significance of their Master's life and words, so to us the office of the teaching Spirit is to bring to our minds the deep significance of the record by these earliest scholars of what they learned from Him. The authority of the New Testament over our faith is based upon these words, and Paul's warning applies especially to this generation, with its thoughts about a continuous inspiration and outgrowing of the New Testament teaching: 'If a man think himself to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.'

Now from all this take three counsels. Let this great promise fill us with shame. Look at Christendom. Does it not contradict such words as these? Disputatious sects, Christians scarcely agreed upon any one of the great central doctrines, seem a strange fulfilment. The present condition of Christendom does not prove that Jesus Christ did not send the Spirit, but it does prove that Christ's followers have been wofully remiss and negligent in their acceptance and use of the Spirit. What slow scholars we are! How little we have learnt! How we have let passion, prejudice, human voices, the babble of men's tongues, anybody and everybody, take the office of teaching us God's truth, instead of waiting before Him and letting His Spirit teach us! It is the shame of us Christians that, with such a Teacher, we, 'when for the time we ought to be teachers, have need that one teach us again which be the first principles of the oracles of Christ!'

Let it fill us with desire and with diligence. Let it fill us with calm hope. They tell us that Christianity is effete. Have we got all out of Jesus Christ that is in Him? Is the process that has been going on for all these centuries to stop now? No! Depend upon it that the new problems of this generation will find their solution where the old problems of past generations have found theirs, and the old commandment of the old Christ will be the new commandment of the new Christ.

Foolish men, both on the Christian and on the anti-Christian side, stand and point to the western sky and say, 'The Sun is setting.' But there is a flush in the opposite horizon in an hour, as at midsummer; and that which sank in the west rises fresh and bright in the east for a new day. Jesus Christ is the Christ for all the ages and for every soul, and the world will only learn more and more of His inexhaustible fullness. So let us be ever quiet, patient,

hopeful amidst the babble of tongues and the surges of controversy, assured that all change will but make more plain the inexhaustible significance of the infinite Christ, and that humble and obedient hearts will ever possess the promised Teacher, nor ever cry in vain, 'Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness.'

CHRIST'S PEACE

'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'—JOHN xiv. 27.

'Peace be unto you!' was, and is, the common Eastern salutation, both in meeting and in parting. It carries us back to a state of society in which every stranger might be an enemy. It is a confession of the deep unrest of the human heart. Christ was about closing His discourse, and the common word of leave-taking came naturally to His lips; just as when He first met His followers after the Resurrection, He soothed their fears by the calm and familiar greeting, 'Peace be unto you!' But common words deepen their force and meaning when He uses them. In Him 'all things become new,' and on His lips the conventional threadbare salutation changes into a tender and mysterious communication of a real gift. His words are deeds, and His wishes for His disciples fulfil themselves.

I. So we have here, first, the greeting, which is a gift.

'Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.' We have seen, in former discourses on this chapter, how prominently and repeatedly our Lord insists on the great truth of His dwelling with and in His disciples. He gives His peace because He gives Himself; and in the bestowal of His life He bestows, in so far as we possess the gift, the qualities and attributes of that life. His peace is inseparable from His presence. It comes with Him, like an atmosphere; it is never where He is not. It was His peace inasmuch as, in His own experience, He possessed it. His manhood was untroubled by perturbation or tumult, by passions or contending desires, and no outward things could break His calm. If we open our hearts by lowly faith, love, and aspiration for His entrance, we too may be at rest; for His peace, like all which He is and has, is His that it may be ours.

The first requisite for peace is consciousness of harmonious and loving relations between me and God. The deepest secret of Christ's peace was His unbroken consciousness of unbroken communion with the Father, in which His will submitted and the whole being of the man hung in filial dependence upon God. And the centre and foundation of all the peace-giving power of Jesus Christ is this, that in His death, by His one offering for sin for ever, He has swept away the occasion of antagonism, and so made peace between the twain, the Father in the heavens and the child, rebellious and prodigal, here below. Little as these disciples dreamed of it, the death impending, which was already beginning to cast its shadow over their souls, was the condition of securing to them and to us the true beginning of all real peace, the rectifying of our antagonistic relation to God, and the bringing Him and us into perfect concord.

My brother, no man can be at rest down to the very roots of His being, in the absence of the consciousness that he is at peace with God. There may be tumults of gladness, there may be much of stormy brightness in the life, but there cannot be the calm, still, impregnable, all-pervading, and central tranquillity that our souls hunger for, unless we know and feel that we are right with God, and that there is nothing between us and Him.

And it is because Jesus Christ, dying on the Cross, has made it possible for you and me to feel this, that He Is our peace, and that He can say, 'Peace I leave with you.'

Another requisite is that we must be at peace with ourselves. There must be no stinging conscience, there must be no unsatisfied desires, there must be no inner schism between inclination and duty, reason and will, passion and judgment. There must be the quiet of a harmonised nature which has one object, one aim, one love; which—to use a very vulgar phrase—has 'all its eggs in one basket,' and has no contradictions running through its inmost self. There is only one way to get that peace—cleaving to Jesus Christ and making Him our Lord, our righteousness, our aim, our all. Your consciences will sting, and that destroys peace; or if they do not sting, they will be torpid, and that destroys peace, for death is not peace. Unless we take Christ for our love, for the light of our minds, for the Sovereign Arbiter and Lord of our will, for the home of our desires, for the aim of our efforts, we shall never know what it is to be at rest. Unsatisfied and hungry we shall go through life, seeking what nothing short of an Infinite Humanity can ever give us, and that is a heart to lean our heads upon, an adequate object for all our faculties, and so a quiet satisfaction of all our desires. 'Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread?' A question that no man can answer without convicting himself of folly! There is One, and only One, who is enough for me, poor and weak and lowly and fleeting as I am, and as my earthly life is. Take that One for your Treasure, and you are rich indeed. The world without Christ is nought. Christ without the world is enough.

Nor is there any other way of healing the inner discord, schism, and contradiction of our anarchic nature, except in bringing it all into submission to His merciful rule. Look at that troubled kingdom that each of us carries about within himself, passion dragging this way, conscience that, a hundred desires all arrayed against one another, inclination here, duty there, till we are torn in pieces like a man drawn asunder by wild horses. And what is to be done with all that rebellious self, over which the poor soul rules as it may, and rules so poorly? Oh! there is an inner unrest, the necessary fate of every man who does not take Christ for his King. But when He enters the heart with His silken leash, the old fable comes true, and He binds the lions and the ravenous beasts there with its slender tie and leads them along, tamed, by the cord of love, and all harnessed to pull together in the chariot that He guides. There is only one way for a man to be at peace with himself through and through, and that is that he should put the guidance of his life into the hands of Jesus Christ, and let Him do with it as He will. There is one power, and only one, that can draw after it all the multitudinous heaped waters of the weltering ocean, and that is the quiet, silver moon in the heavens that pulls the tidal wave, into which melt and merge all currents and small breakers, and rolls it round the whole earth. And so Christ, shining down lambent, and gentle, but changeless, from the darkest of our skies, will draw, in one great surge of harmonised motion, all the else contradictory currents of our stormy souls. 'My peace I give unto you.'

Another element in true tranquillity, which again is supplied only by Jesus Christ, is peace with men. 'Whence come wars and fightings amongst you? From your lusts.' Or to translate the old-fashioned phraseology into modern English, the reason why men are in antagonism with one another is the central selfishness of each, and there is only one way by which men's relations can be thoroughly sweetened, and that is, by the divine love of

Jesus Christ pouring into their hearts, and casting out the devil of selfishness, and so blending them all into one harmonious whole.

The one basis of true, happy relations between man and man, without which there is not the all-round tranquillity that we require, lies in the common relation of all, if it may be, but certainly in the individual relation of myself, to Him who is the Lover and the Friend of all. And in the measure in which the law of the Spirit of life which was in Jesus Christ is in me, in that measure do I find it possible to reproduce His gentleness, sympathy, compassion, insight into men's sorrows, patience with men's offences, and all which makes, in our relations to one another, the harmony and the happiness of humanity.

Another of the elements or aspects of peace is peace with the outer world. 'It is hard to kick against the pricks,' but if you do not kick against them, they will not prick you. We beat ourselves all bruised and bleeding against the bars of the prison-house in trying to escape from it, but if we do not beat ourselves against them, they will not hurt us. If we do not want to get out of prison, it does not matter though we are locked in. And so it is not external calamities, but the resistance of the will to these, that makes the disturbances of life. Submission is peace, and when a man with Christ in his heart can say what Christ said, 'Not My will, but Thine be done,' Oh! then, some faint beginnings, at least, of tranquillity come to the most agitated and buffeted; and even in the depths of our sorrow we may have a deeper depth of calm. If we have yielded ourselves to the Father's will, through that dear Son who has set the example and communicates the power of filial obedience, then all winds blow us to our haven, and all 'things work together for good,' and nothing 'that is at enmity with joy' can shake our settled peace. Storms may break upon the rocky shore of our islanded lives, but deep in the centre there will be a secluded, inland dell 'which heareth not the loud winds when they call,' and where no tempest can ever reach. Peace may be ours in the midst of warfare and of storms, for Christ with us reconciles us to God, harmonises us with ourselves, brings us into amity with men, and makes the world all good.

II. So, secondly, note here the world's gift, which is an illusion.

'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' Our Lord contrasts, as it seems to me, primarily the manner of the world's bestowment, and then passes insensibly into a contrast between the character of the world's gifts and His own. That phrase 'the world' may have a double sense. It may mean either mankind in general or the whole external and material frame of things. I think we may use both significations in elucidating the words before us.

Regarding it in the former of them, the thought is suggested—Christ *gives*; men can only *wish*. 'Peace be unto you' comes from many a lip, and is addressed to many an ear, unfulfilled. Christ says 'peace,' and His word is a conveyance. How little we can do for one another's tranquillity, how soon we come to the limits of human love and human help! How awful and impassable is the isolation in which each human soul lives! After all love and fellowship we dwell alone on our little island in the deep, separated by 'the salt, unplumbed, estranging sea,' and we can do little more than hoist signals of goodwill, and now and then for a moment stretch our hands across the 'echoing straits between.' But it is little after all that husband or wife can do for one another's central peace, little that the

dearest friend can give. We have to depend upon ourselves and upon Christ for peace. That which the world wishes Christ gives.

And then, if we take the other signification of the 'world,' and the other application of the whole promise, we may say—Outward things can give a man no real peace. The world is for excitement; Christ alone has the secret of tranquillity. It is as if to a man in a fever a physician should come and say: 'I cannot give you anything to soothe you; here is a glass of brandy for you.' That would not help the fever, would it? The world comes to us and says: 'I cannot give you rest: here is a sharp excitement for you, more highly spiced and titillating for your tongue than the last one, which has turned flat and stale.' That is about the best that it can do.

Oh! what a confession of unrest are the rush and recklessness, the fever and the fret of our modern life with its ever renewed and ever disappointed quest after good! You go about our streets and look men in the face, and you see how all manner of hungry desires and eager wishes have imprinted themselves there. And now and then—how seldom!—you come across a face out of which beams a deep and settled peace. How many of you are there who dare not be quiet because then you are most troubled? How many of you are there who dare not reflect because then you are wretched? How many of you are uncomfortable when alone, either because you are utterly vacuous, or because then you are surrounded by the ghosts of ugly thoughts that murder sleep and stuff every pillow with thorns? The world will bring you excitement; Christ, and Christ alone will bring you rest.

The peace that earth gives is a poor affair at best. It is shallow; a very thin plating over a depth of restlessness, like some skin of turf on a volcano, where a foot below the surface sulphurous fumes roll, and hellish turbulence seethes. That is the kind of rest that the world brings.

Oh! dear friends, there is nothing in this world that will fill and satisfy your hearts except only Jesus Christ. The world is for excitement; and Christ is the only real Giver of real peace.

III. Lastly, note the duty of the recipients of that peace of Christ's: 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

The words that introduced this great discourse return again at its close, somewhat enlarged and with a deepened soothing and tenderness. There are two things referred to as the source of restlessness, troubled agitation or disturbance of heart; and that mainly, I suppose, because of terror in the outlook towards a dim and unknown future. The disciples are warned to fight against these if they would keep the gift of peace.

That is to say, casting the exhortation into a more general expression, Christ's gift of peace does not dispense with the necessity for our own effort after tranquillity. There is much in the outer world that will disturb us to the very end, and there is much within ourselves that will surge up and seek to shake our repose and break our peace; and we have to coerce and keep down the temptations to anxiety, the temptations to undue agitation of desire, the temptations to tumults of sorrow, the temptations to cowardly fears of the unknown future. All these will continue, even though we have Christ's peace in our hearts, and it is for us to see to it that we treasure the peace, 'and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let our requests be made known unto God,' that nothing may break the calm which we possess.

So, then, another thought arises from this final exhortation, and that is, that it is useless to tell a man, 'Do not be troubled, and do not be afraid,' unless he first has Christ's peace as his. Is that peace yours, my brother, because Jesus Christ is yours? If so, then there is no reason for your being troubled or dreading any future. If it is not, you are mad not to be troubled, and you are insane if you are not afraid. The word for you is, 'Be troubled, ye careless ones,' for there is reason for it, and be afraid of that which is certainly coming. The one thing that gives security and makes it possible to possess a calm heart is the possession of Jesus Christ by faith. Without Him it is a waste of breath to say to people, 'Do not be frightened,' and it is wicked counsel to say to men, 'Be at ease.' They ought to be terrified, and they ought to be troubled, and they will be some day, whether they think so or not.

But then the last thought from this exhortation is—and now I speak to Christian people—your imperfect possession of this peace is all your own fault. Why, there are hundreds of professing Christian people who have some kind of faint, rudimentary faith, and there are many of them, I dare say, listening to me now, who have no assured possession of any of those elements, of which I have been speaking, as the constituent parts of Christ's peace. You are *not* sure that you are right with God. You do *not* know what it is to possess satisfied desires. You *do* know what it is to have conflicting inclinations and impulses; you have envy and malice and hostility against men; and the world's storms and disasters do strike and disturb you. Why? Because you have not a firm grasp of Jesus Christ. 'I have set the Lord always at my right hand, therefore I shall not be moved'; there is the secret. Keep near Him, my brother; and then all things are fair, and your heart is at peace.

I remember once standing by the side of a little Highland loch on a calm autumn day, when all the winds were still, and every birch-tree stood unmoved, and every twig was reflected on the steadfast mirror, into the depths of which Heaven's own blue seemed to have found its way. That is what our hearts may be, if we let Christ put His guarding hand round them to keep the storms off, and have Him within us for our rest. But the man who does not trust Jesus 'is like the troubled sea which cannot rest,' but goes moaning round half the world, homeless and hungry, rolling and heaving, monotonous and yet changeful, salt and barren—the true emblem of every soul that has not listened to the merciful call, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

JOY AND FAITH, THE FRUITS OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE

'Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.'—JOHN xiv. 28, 29.

Our Lord here casts a glance backward on the course of His previous words, and gathers together the substance and purpose of these. He brings out the intention of His warnings and the true effect of the departure, concerning which He had given them notice, as being twofold. In the first verse of my text His words about that going away, and the going away itself, are represented as the source of joy, which is an advance on the peace that He had just previously been promising. In the second of our verses these two things—His words, and the facts which they revealed—are represented as being the very ground and nourishment of faith.

So, then, we have these two thoughts to look at now, the departed Lord, the fountain of joy to all who love Him; the departed Lord, the ground and food of faith.

I. The departure of the Lord is a fountain of joy to those who love Him.

In the first part of our text the going away of Jesus is contemplated in two aspects.

The first is that with which we have already become familiar in previous sermons on this chapter—viz., its bearing upon the disciples; and in that respect it is declared that Christ's going is Christ's coming.

But then we have a new aspect, one on which, in His sublime self-repression, He very seldom touches—viz., its bearing upon Himself; and in that aspect we are taught here to regard our Lord's going as ministering to His exaltation and joy, and therefore as being a source of joy to all His lovers.

So, then, we have these thoughts, Christ's going is Christ's coming, and Christ's going is Christ's exaltation, and for both reasons that departure ought to minister to His friends' gladness. Let us look at these three things for a little while.

First of all, there comes a renewed utterance of that great thought which runs through the whole chapter, that the departure of Jesus Christ is in reality the coming of Christ. The word 'again' is a supplement, and somewhat restricts and destroys the true flow of thought and meaning of the words. For if we read, as our Authorised Version does, 'I go away and come again unto you,' we are inevitably led to think of a coming, separated by a considerable distance of time from the departure, and for most of us that which is suggested is the final coming and return, in bodily form, of the Lord Jesus.

Now great and glorious as that hope is, it is too far away to be in itself a sufficient comfort to the mourning disciples, and too remote to be for us, if taken alone, a sufficient ground of joy and of rest. But if you strike out the intrusive word '*again*,' and read the sentence as being what it is, a description of one continuous process, of which the parts are

so closely connected as to be all but contemporaneous, you get the true idea. 'I go away, and I come to you.' There is no gap, the thing runs on without a break. There is no moment of absolute absence; there are not two motions, one from us and the other back again towards us, but all is one. The 'going' is the 'coming'; the solemn series of events which began on Calvary, and ended on Olivet, to the eye of sense were successive stages in the departure of Jesus Christ. But looked at with a deeper understanding of their true meaning, they are successive stages in His approach towards us. His death, His resurrection, His ascension, were not steps in the cessation of His presence, but they were simply steps in the transition from a lower to a higher kind of that presence. He changed the limitations and externalities of a mere bodily, local nearness for the realities of a spiritual presence. To the eye of sense, the 'going away' was the reality, and the 'coming' a metaphor. To the eye enlightened to see things as they are, the dropping away of the visible corporeal was but the inauguration of the higher and the more real. And we need to reverse our notions of what is real and what is figurative in Christ's presence, and to feel that that form of His presence which we may all have to-day is far more real than the form which ceased when the Shekinah cloud 'received Him out of their sight,' before we can penetrate to the depth of His words, or grasp the whole fullness of blessing and of consolation which lie in them here. In a very deep and real sense, 'He therefore departed from us for a season that we might receive Him for ever.'

The real presence of Jesus Christ to-day, and through the long ages with every waiting heart, is the very keynote to the solemn music of these chapters. And again I press upon you, and upon myself, the question, Do we believe it? Do we live in the faith of it? Does it fill the same place in the perspective of our Christian creed as it does in the revelation of the Scripture, or have we refined it and watered it down, until it comes to be little more than merely the continuous influence of the record of His past, just as any great and sovereign spirit that has influenced mankind may still 'rule the nations from his urn'? Or do we take Him at His word, and believe that He meant what He said, in something far other than a violent figure for the continuance of His influence and of the inspiration drawn from Him, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'? 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend up into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above, the Word,' the Incarnate Word, 'is nigh thee, in thy heart,' if thou lovest and trustest Him.

Then, again, the other aspect of our Lord's coming, which is emphasised here, is that in which it is regarded as affecting Himself. Christ's going is Christ's exaltation.

Now observe that, in the first clause of our verse, there is simply specified the fact of departure, without any reference to the 'whither'; because all that was wanted was to contrast the going and the coming. But, in the second clause, in which the emphasis rests not so much upon the fact of departure as upon the goal to which He went, we read: 'I go *to the Father*.' Hitherto we have been contemplating Christ's departure simply in its bearing upon us, but here, with exquisite tenderness, He unveils another aspect of it, and that in order that He may change His disciples' sadness into joy; and says to them, 'If ye were not so absorbed in yourselves, you would have a thought to spare about Me, and you would feel that you should be glad because I am about to be exalted.'

Very, very seldom does He open such a glimpse into His heart, and it is all the more tender and impressive when He does. What a hint of the continual self-sacrifice of the

human life of Jesus Christ lies in this thought, that He bids His disciples rejoice with Him, because the time is getting nearer its end, and He goes back to the Father! And what shall we say of the nature of Him to whom it was martyrdom to live, and a supreme instance of self-sacrificing humiliation to be 'found in fashion as a man'?

He tells His followers here that a reason for their joy in His departure is to be found in this fact, that He goes to the Father, who is greater than Himself.

Now mark, with regard to that remarkable utterance, that the whole course of thought in the context requires, as it seems to me, that we should suppose that for Christ to 'go to the Father' was to share in the Father's greatness. Why else should the disciples be bidden to rejoice in it? or why should He say anything at all about the greatness of the Father? If so, then this follows, that the greatness to which He here alludes is such as He enters by His ascension. Or, in other words, that the inferiority, of whatever nature it may be, to which He here alludes, falls away when He passes hence.

Now these words are often quoted triumphantly, as if they were dead against what I venture to call the orthodox and Scriptural doctrine of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it may be worth while to remark that that doctrine accepts this saying as fully as it does Christ's other word, 'I and My Father are one,' I venture to think that it is the only construction of Scripture phraseology which does full justice to all the elements. But be that as it may, I wish to remind you that the creed which confesses the unity of the Godhead and the divinity of Jesus Christ is not to be overthrown by pelting this verse at it; for this verse is part of that creed, which as fully declares that the Father is greater than the Son, as it declares that the Son is One with the Father. You may be satisfied with it or no, but as a matter of simple honesty it must be recognised that the creed of the Catholic Church does combine both the elements of these representations.

Now we can only speak in this matter as Scripture guides us. The depths of Deity are far too deep to be sounded by our plummets, and he is a bold man who ventures to say that he knows what is impossible in reference to the divine nature. He needs to have gone all round God, and down to the depths, and up to the heights of a bottomless and summitless infinitude, before he has a right to say that. But let me remind you that we can dimly see that the very names 'Father' and 'Son' do imply some sort of subordination, but that that subordination, inasmuch as it is in the timeless and inward relations of divinity, must be supposed to exist after the ascension, as it existed before the incarnation; and, therefore, any such mysterious difference is not that which is referred to here. What *is* referred to is what dropped away from the Man Jesus Christ, when He ascended up on high. As Luther has it, in his strong, simple way, in one of his sermons, 'Here He was a poor, sad, suffering Christ'; and that garb of lowliness falls from Him, like the mantle that fell from the prophet as he went up in the chariot of fire, when He passes behind the brightness of the Shekinah cloud that hides Him from our sight. That in which the Father was greater than He, in so far as our present purpose is concerned, was that which He left behind when He ascended, even the pain, the suffering, the sorrow, the restrictions, the humiliation, that made so much of the burden of His life. Therefore we, as His followers, have to rejoice in an ascended Christ, beneath whose feet are foes, and far away from whose human personality are all the ills that flesh is heir to. 'If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for My Father is greater than I.'

So then the third thought, in this first part of our subject, is that on both these grounds Christ's ascension and departure are a source of joy. The two aspects of His departure, as affecting Him and as affecting us, are inseparably welded together. There can be no presence with us, man by man, through all the ages, and in every land, unless He, whose presence it is, participates in the absolute glory of divinity. For to be with you and me and all our suffering brethren, through the centuries and over the world, involves something more than belongs to mere humanity. Therefore, the two sources of gladness are confluent—Christ's ascension as affecting us is inseparably woven in with Christ's ascension as affecting Himself.

Love will delight to dwell upon that thought of its exalted Lover. We may fairly apply the simplicity of human relationships and affections to the elucidation of what ought to be our affection to Him, our Lord. And surely if our dearest one were far away from us, in some lofty position, our hearts and our thoughts would ever be going thither, and we should live more there than here, where we are 'cribbed, cabined, and confined.' And if we love Jesus Christ with any depth of earnestness and fervour of affection, there will be no thought more sweet to us, and none which will more naturally flow into our hearts, whenever they are for a moment at leisure, than this, the thought of Him, our Brother and Forerunner, who has ascended up on high; and in the midst of the glory of the throne bears us in His heart, and uses His glory for our blessing. Love will spring to where the beloved is; and if we be Christians in any deep and real sense, our hearts will have risen with Christ, and we shall be sitting with Him at the right hand of God. My brother, measure your Christianity, and the reality of your love to Jesus Christ, by this—is it to you natural, and a joy, to turn to Him, and ever to make present to your mind the glories in which He loves and lives, and intercedes, and reigns, for you? 'If ye love Me, ye will rejoice, because I go unto the Father.'

II. And now I can deal with the second verse of our text very briefly. For our purpose it is less important than the former one. In it we find our Lord setting forth, secondly, His departure and His announcement of His departure as the ground and food of faith.

He knew what a crash was coming, and with exquisite tenderness, gentleness, knowledge of their necessities, and suppression of all His own feelings and emotions, He gave Himself to prepare the disciples for the storm, that, forewarned, they might be forearmed, and that when it did burst upon them, it might not take them by surprise.

So He does still, about a great many other things, and tells us beforehand of what is sure to come to us, that when we are caught in the midst of the tempest we may not bate one jot of heart or hope.

Why should I complain
Of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?
He told me no less.'

And when my sorrows come to me, I may say about them what He says about His departure—He has told us before, that when it comes we may believe.

But note how, in these final words of my text, Christ avows that the great aim of His utterances and of His departure is to evoke our faith. And what does He mean by faith? He means, first of all, a grasp of the historic facts—His death, His resurrection, His ascension.

He means, next, the understanding of these as He Himself has explained them—a death of sacrifice, a resurrection of victory over death and the grave, and an ascension to rule and guide His Church and the world, and to send His divine Spirit into men's hearts if they will receive it. And He means, therefore, as the essence of the faith that He would produce in all our hearts—a reliance upon Himself as thus revealed, Sacrifice by His death, Victor by His resurrection, King and interceding Priest by His ascension—a reliance upon Himself as absolute as the facts are sure, as unfaltering as is His eternal sameness. The faith that grasps the Christ, dead, risen, ascended, as its all in all, for time and for eternity, is the faith which by all His work, and by all His words about His work, He desires to kindle in our hearts. Has He kindled it in yours?

Then there is a second thought—viz., that these facts, as interpreted by Himself, are the ground and the nourishment of our faith. How differently they looked when seen from the further side and when seen from the hither side! Anticipated and dimly anticipated, they were all doleful and full of dismay; remembered and looked back upon, they were radiant and bright. The disciples felt, with shrinking hearts and fainting spirits, that their whole reliance upon Jesus Christ was on the point of being shattered, and that everything was going when He died. 'We *trusted*,' said two of them, with such a sad use of the past tense, 'we *trusted* that this *had been* He which should have redeemed Israel. But we do not trust it any more, nor do we expect Him to be Israel's Redeemer now.' But after the facts were all unveiled, there came back the memory of His words, and they said to one another, 'Did He not tell us that it was all to be so? How blind we were not to understand Him!'

And so 'the Cross, the grave, the skies,' are the foundations of our faith; and they who see Him dying, rising, ascended, henceforth will find it impossible to doubt. Feed your faith upon these great facts, and take Christ's own explanation of them, and your faith will be strong.

Again, we learn here that faith is the condition of the true presence of our absent Lord. Faith is that on our side which corresponds to His spiritual coming to us. Whosoever trusts Him possesses Him, and He is with and in every soul that, loving Him, relies upon Him, in a closeness so close and a presence so real that heaven itself does not bring the spirit of the believer and the Spirit of the Lord nearer one another, though it takes away the bodily film that sometimes seems to part their lives.

We, too, may and should be glad when we lift our eyes to that Throne where our Brother reigns. We too, may be glad that He is there, because His being there is the reason why He can be here; and we, too, may feed our faith upon Him, and so bring Him in very deed to dwell in our hearts. If we would have Christ within us, let us trust Him dying, rising, living in the heavens; and then we shall learn how, by all three apparent departures, He is drawing the closer to the souls that love and trust.

CHRIST FORESEEING HIS PASSION

'Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, Let us go hence.'—JOHN xiv. 30,31.

The summons to departure which closes these verses shows that we have now reached the end of that sacred hour in the upper room. In obedience to the summons, we have to fancy the little group leaving its safe shelter, as sailors might put out from behind a breakwater into a stormy sea. They pass from its seclusion and peace into the joyous stir of the crowded streets, filled with feast-keeping multitudes, on whom the full paschal moon looked down, pure and calming. Somewhere between the upper chamber and the crossing of the brook Kedron, the divine words of the following chapters were spoken, but this discourse, closely connected as it is with them, reaches its fitting close in these penetrating, solemn words of outlook into the near future, so calm, so weighty, so resolute, so almost triumphant, with which Christ seeks finally to impart to His timorous friends some of His own peace and assurance of victory.

They lead us into a region seldom opened to our view, and never to be looked upon but with reverent awe. For they tell us what Christ thought about His sufferings, and how He felt as He went down to that cold, black river, in which He was to be baptized. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground.' So, reverently listening to the words, sacred because of the Speaker, the theme, and the circumstances, we note in them these things: His calm anticipation of the assailant, His unveiling of the secret and motive of His apparent defeat, and His resolute advance to the conflict. Let us look at these three points.

I. First, we have here our Lord's calm anticipation of the assailant.

'Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' One of the other Gospels tells us, in finishing its account of our Lord's temptation in the wilderness, that when Satan had ended all these temptations 'he departed from Him for a season.' And now we have the second and the intenser form of that assault. The first was addressed to desires, and sought to stimulate ambition and ostentation and the animal appetites, and so, through the cravings of human nature, to shake the Master's fixed faith. The second used sharper and more fatal weapons, and appealed, not to desire of enjoyment, or ease, or good, but to the natural human shrinking from pain and suffering and shame and death. He that was impervious on the side of natural necessities and more subtle spiritual desires might yet be reached through terror. And so the second form of the assault, instead of tempting the traveller by the sunshine to cast aside his cloak, tempted him by storm and tempest to fling it aside; and the one, as the other, was doomed to failure.

Note how the Master, with that clear eye which saw to the depths as well as the heights, and before which men and things were but, as it were, transparent media through which

unseen spiritual powers wrought, just as He discerns the Father's will as supreme and sovereign, sees here—beneath Judas's treachery, and Pharisees' and priests' envy, and the people's stolid indifference, and the Roman soldiers' impartial scorn—the workings of a personal source and centre of all. The 'Prince of this world,' who rules men and things when they are severed from God, 'cometh.' Christ's sensitive nature apprehends the approach of the evil thing, as some organisations can tell when a thunderstorm is about to burst. His divine Omniscience, working as it did, even within the limits of humanity, knows not only when the storm is about to burst upon Him, but knows who it is that has raised the tempest. And so He says, 'The Prince of this world cometh.'

But note, as yet more important, that tremendous and unique consciousness of absolute invulnerability against the assaults. 'He hath nothing in Me.' He is 'the Prince of the world,' but His dominion stops outside My breast. He has no rule or authority there. His writs do not run, nor is His dominion recognised, within that sacred realm.

Was there ever a man who could say that? Are there any of us, the purest and the noblest, who, standing single-handed in front of the antagonistic power of evil, and believing it to be consolidated and consecrated in a person, dare to profess that there is not a thing in us on which he can lay his black claw and say—'That is mine?' Is there nothing inflammable within us which the 'fiery darts of the wicked' can kindle? Are there any of us who bar our doors so tightly as that we can say that none of his seductions will find their way therein, and that nothing there will respond to them? Christ sets Himself here against the whole embattled and embodied power of evil, and puts Himself in contrast to the universal human experience, when He calmly declares 'He hath nothing in Me.' It is an assertion of His absolute freedom from sinfulness, and it involves, as I take it, the other assertion—that as He is free from sin, so He is not subject to that consequence of sin, which is death, as we know it. Another part of Scripture speaks to us in strange language, which yet has in it a deep truth, of 'him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Men fall under the rightful dominion of the king of evil when they sin, and part of the proof of his dominion is the fact of physical death, with its present accompaniments. Thus, in His calm anticipation, Jesus stands waiting for the enemy's charge, knowing that all its forces will be broken against the serried ranks of His immaculate purity, and that He will come from the dreadful close unwounded all, and triumphant for evermore.

But do not let us suppose that because Christ, in His anticipation of suffering and death, knew Himself invulnerable, with not even a spot on His heel into which the arrow could go, therefore the conflict was an unreal or shadowy one. It was a true fight, and it was a real struggle that He was anticipating, thus calmly in these solemn words, as knowing Himself the Victor ere He entered on the dreadful field.

II. So note, secondly, in these words, our Lord's unveiling of the motive and aim of His apparent defeat.

'But that the world might know that I love the Father, and, as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.' There may be some uncertainty about the exact grammatical relation of these clauses to one another, with which I need not trouble you, because it does not affect their substantial meaning. However we solve the mere grammatical questions, the fundamental significance of the whole remains unaffected, and it is this: that Christ's

sufferings and death were, in one aspect, for the purpose that the world might know His love to the Father, and, in another aspect, were obedience to the Father's commandment. And if we consider these two aspects, I think we shall get some thoughts worth considering as to the way in which the Master Himself looks upon these sufferings and that death.

The first point I note in this division of my discourse is that Christ would have us regard His sufferings and His death as His own act. Note that remarkable phrase, 'thus I *do*.' A strange word to be used in such a connection, but full of profound meaning. We speak, and rightly, of the solemn events of these coming days as the passion of our Lord, but they were His action quite as much as His passion. He was no mere passive sufferer. In them all He acted, or, as He says here, we may look upon them all, not as things inflicted upon Him from without by any power, however it might seem to have the absolute control of His fate, but as things which He did Himself.

There is one Man who died, not of physical necessity, but because of free choice. There is one Man who chose to be born, and who chose to die; who, in His choosing to be born, chose humiliation, and who, in choosing to die, chose yet deeper humiliation. This sacrifice was a voluntary sacrifice, or, to speak more accurately, He was both Priest and Sacrifice, when 'through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot unto God.' The living Christ is the Lord of Life, and lives because He will; the dying Christ is the Lord of Death, and dies because He chose. He would have us learn that all His bitter sufferings, inflicted from without as they were, and traceable to a deeper source than merely human antagonism, were also self-inflicted and self-chosen, and further traceable to the Father's will in harmony with His own. 'Thus I do,' and thus He did when He died.

Then, further, our Lord would have us regard these sufferings and that death as being His crowning act of obedience to His Father's will. That is in accordance with the whole tone of His self-consciousness, especially as set before us in this precious Gospel of John, which traces up everything to the submission of the divine Son to the divine Father, a submission which is no mere external act, but results from, and is the expression of, the absolute unity of will and the perfect oneness of mutual love. And so, because He loved the Father, therefore He came to do the Father's will, and the crowning act of His obedience was this, that He was 'obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.' It was a voluntary sacrifice, but that voluntariness was not self-will. It was a sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, but that obedience was not reluctant. Christ was the embodiment of the divine purpose, formed before the ages and realised in time, when He bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. The highest proof of His filial obedience was the Cross. And to it He points us, if we would know what it is to love and obey the Father.

Now it is to be noticed that this motive of our Lord's death is not the usual one given in Scripture. And I can suppose the question being put, 'Why did not Jesus Christ say, in that supreme moment, that He went to the Cross because of His love to us rather than because of His love to the Father?' But I think the answer is not far to seek. There are several satisfactory ones which may be given. One is that this making prominent of His love to God rather than to us, as the motive for His death, is in accordance with that comparative reticence on the part of Jesus as to the atoning aspect of His death, which I have had frequent occasion to point out, and which does not carry in it the implication that that doctrine was a new thing in the Christian preaching after Pentecost. Another reason may be

drawn from the whole strain and tone of this chapter, which, as I have already said, traces up everything to the loving relations of obedience between the Father and Son. And yet another reason may be given in that the very statement of Christ's love to God, and loving obedience to the Father's commandment as the motive of His death, includes in it necessarily the other thing—love to us. For what was the Father's commandment which Christ with all His heart accepted, and with His glad will obeyed unto death? It was that the Son should come as the Ransom for the world. The Son of man was sent, 'not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a Ransom for many.' Or, as He Himself said, in one of His earliest discourses, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.' And for what He gave that Son is clearly stated in the context itself of that passage—'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.'

To speak of Christ's acceptance of the Father's commandment, then, is but another way of saying that Christ, in all the fullness of His self-surrender, entered into and took as His own the great, eternal divine purpose, that the world should be redeemed by His death upon the Cross. The heavenward side of His love to man is His love to the Father, God.

Now there is another aspect still in which our Lord would here have us regard His sufferings and death, and that is that they are of worldwide significance.

Think for a moment of the obscurity of the speaker, a Jewish peasant in an upper room, with a handful of poor men around Him, all of them ready to forsake Him, within a few hours of His ignominious death; and yet He says, 'I am about to die, that the echo of it may reverberate through the whole world.' He puts Himself forth as of worldwide significance, and His death as adapted to move mankind, and as one day to be known all over the world. There is nothing in history to approach to the gigantic arrogance of Jesus Christ, and it is only explicable on the ground of His divinity.

'This I do that *the world* may know.' And what did it matter to the world? Why should it be of any importance that the world should know? For one plain reason, because true knowledge of the true nature and motive of that death breaks the dominion of the Prince of this world, and sets men free from his tyranny. Emancipation, hope, victory, purity, the passing from the tyranny of the darkness into the blessed kingdom of the light—all depend on the world's knowing that Christ's death was His own voluntary act of submission to the infinite love and will of the Father, which will and love He made His own, and therefore died, the sacrifice for the world's sin.

The enemy was approaching. He was to be hoist with his own petard. 'He digged a pit; he digged it deep,' and into the pit which he had digged he himself fell. 'Oh, death! I will be thy plague' by entering into thy realm. 'Oh, grave! I will be thy destruction' by dwelling for a moment within thy dark portals and rending them irreparably as I pass from them. The Prince of this world was defeated when he seemed to triumph, and Christ's mighty words came true: 'Now shall the Prince of this world be cast out.' He would have the world know—with the knowledge which is of the heart as well as the head, which is life as well as understanding, which is possession and appropriation—the mystery, the meaning, the motive of His death, because the world thereby ceases to be a world, and becomes the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

III. Lastly, notice here the resolute advance to the conflict.

'Arise, let us go hence'—a word of swift alacrity. Evidently He rose to His feet whilst they lay round the table. He bids them rise with Him and follow Him on the path.

But there is more in the words than the mere close of a conversation, and a summons to change of place. They indicate a kind of divine impatience to be in the fight, and to have it over. The same emotion is plainly revealed in the whole of the latter days of our Lord's life. You remember how His disciples followed amazed, as He strode up the road from Jericho, hastening to His Cross. You remember His deliberate purpose to draw upon Himself public notice during that dangerous and explosive week before the Passover, as shown in the publicity of His entry into Jerusalem, His sharp rebukes of the rulers in the Temple, and in every other incident of those days. You remember His words to the betrayer: 'That thou doest, do quickly.' These latter hours of the Lord were strongly marked by the emotion to which He gave utterance in His earlier words: 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' Perhaps that feeling indicated His human shrinking; for we all know how we sometimes are glad to precipitate an unwelcome thing, and how the more we dread it, the more we are anxious to get it over. But there is far more than that in it. There is the resolved determination to carry out the Father's purpose for the world's salvation, which was His own purpose, and was none the less His though He knew all the suffering which it involved.

Let us adore the steadfast will, which never faltered, though the natural human weakness was there too, and which, as impelled by some strong spring, kept persistently pressing towards the Cross that on it He might die, the world's Redeemer.

And do not let us forget that He summoned His lovers and disciples to follow Him on the road. 'Let us go hence.' It is ours to take up our cross daily and follow the Master, to do with persistent resolve our duty, whether it be welcome or unwelcome, and to see to it that we plant no faltering and reluctant foot in our Master's footsteps. For us, too, if we have learned to flee to the Cross for our redemption and salvation, the resolve of our Redeemer and the very passion of the Saviour itself become the pattern and law of our lives. We, too, have to cast ourselves into the fight, and to take up our cross, 'that the world may know that we love the Father, and as the Father hath given us commandment.' And if we so live, then our death, too, in some humble measure, may be like His—the crowning act of obedience to the Father's will; in which we are neither passively nor resistingly dragged under by a force that we cannot effectually resist, but in which we go down willingly into the dark valley where death 'makes our sacrifice complete.'