

Gospel of John-F.B.Meyer-4

GOSPEL OF JOHN THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN LOVE TO THE UTTERMOST

F. B. Meyer

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1 THE TROUBLED SAVIOUR

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."--John 12:27.

IN THESE words the Son of Man lays bare his soul. There is no question of the resolute spirit, one with Deity itself in the purpose of redemption; but only a question of the soul, with its sympathetic influence on the flesh. Never for a moment could the blessed Lord swerve from his cherished determination to undo the havoc wrought by Satan in His own fair world. But as He contemplated the awful cost of agony which must first be met by Him, it seemed as if his human nature could never hold out.

In the garden of Gethsemane this awful agony reached its climax. The anguish there anticipated and borne so oppressed his holy, yet weak human nature, that it uttered itself in strong cryings and tears; "and the overflowed soul might have given way to an internal death before the external death of the body, had He not received a strengthening accession of Divine power, in answer to prayer." As Luther says, "A beam may be tested beyond its strength, and may threaten to give way because of the weakness of its nature, not because of anything wanting in itself."

This scene is an anticipation of Gethsemane; the penumbra of the great eclipse. The question of the Greeks had led the Saviour's thoughts to his death and burial, reminding Him that He must fall into the ground to die, before He could bear fruit. He saw, too, the baptism of suffering unto death through which each of his servants must pass, and in which He would die many times again, in sympathy, though not, of course, as Mediator. And as the whole dread aggregate of sorrow arose before his vision, He cried, "Now is my soul troubled."

There is a human side in this scene, which is all that we can understand; but which may help some of us. We cannot launch out into the great deep; but we may wade in the shallows. The humblest Levite in the temple may learn something from the evident anguish of the Great High-Priest, and the way He bore it; though he may not be able to gauge the pressure of that anguish through every part of his wondrous nature, capable to depths equal to its-ascents, of down-sitting proportionate to its uprisings.

I. THE TROUBLED SOUL

We cannot be troubled as He was. On us can never rest the weight of the world's sin, nor even of our own. For us there can never be that lonely resistance to the onset of all the powers of darkness; or the hiding of the Father's face; or the unutterable woe of being made a curse. And yet, who of us does not sometimes taste of trouble beneath which the heart threatens to break down in helpless collapse?

When the love that had filled our life with music is suddenly silenced, or passed on to fill other spheres with its song; when the sun that had flooded our room with light goes off it, and the cold night settles down; when we have to tear out of our lives some evil thing, which had entwined itself about them--as the octopus about the body of the swimmer--and to do it with the anointed head and washed face; when, at the call of duty, which is the call of God, we have to turn our faces away from some radiant rapture, which had long enticed us forward, in order to take a lonelier, rougher path; when we are misunderstood and misinterpreted, by our dearest, misrepresented and maligned; when we see lover and friend stand afar off with veiled faces; when we are perplexed and baffled at God's dealings; when we are called to suffer through the vices and sorrows of those whom we love as ourselves, while

we can do nothing to relieve or save them: then we know what it is to say with Jesus, though in thinner tones, "Now is my soul troubled."

Abraham said it as he trod step by step the path which seemed all too short to Mount Moriah, and knew that the hand which had so often rested in the curls of the darling of his old age must presently strike the knife into his heart. Job said it when, pelted by the accusations of his foes, afflicted with a loathsome disease, perplexed at the dealings of God which confounded all his philosophy, he wished that he had never been born. David said it when he awoke to perceive how, by his grievous sin, he had shaken the fabric of his kingdom, and put into the lips of God's foes a reproach which they have never ceased to use. Jeremiah said it, weeping over the disastrous suicide of his nation. The lovers of Jesus said it as they saw Him deliberately court death, and as they cowered together through the day which followed his decease. And these are but samples of myriads more. Indeed, it is questionable if any life reaches its prime, or unfolds all its beauty, unless there have been some dark hours in which cries of pain have borne witness to the troubled soul.

II. THE RESORT OF THE TROUBLED SOUL

"Father!" When the soul is smitten by a huge wave of anguish, it shivers from stem to stern, and for a moment questions with itself as to what it shall say: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" At such times let us beware lest we speak inadvisedly. There is a deliberateness about speech which aggravates the inner temper. Repress the utterance, and you will often mitigate the passion of feeling which boils turbulently below. There was no fear of our Lord speaking the wrong word, but there is every fear of our doing so; and when once it is uttered, it stamps itself indelibly not only on ourselves, but on the minds and hearts of others, to go on breeding evil for all coming time.

But there is one word which can never be unfitting: "Father." Once before, our Lord had hidden Himself there, when face to face with the mystery of Divine Providence, which reveals to babes what it hides from the wise and prudent. "Even so, Father!" an expression which might be rendered, "Yes, Father!" Here, again, in this dark hour, He murmurs that dear name over and over, to hush and quiet his troubled soul. And in the garden He repeated it again and again: "O my Father! Abba, Father!"

There are times when the soul knows by sure token the presence and love of God. It cannot give reasons why; it is satisfied to know it; as a child lying beneath its mother's smiles knows that she loves it, and as a shivering invalid brought into the sun knows that it is warm. But it is not always so; shadows fling themselves on the landscape. Clouds marshal themselves in the sky. We can no longer live by sight. Then we are tempted to think that we are deserted indeed; and as we yield to this impression, we begin to fall as into a bottomless pit of despondency.

At such times, there is no medicine which will so certainly restore the tone of the soul, as to look up and compel yourself to say "Father." To say it when you do not feel it; to say it in the teeth of every appearance to the contrary; to say it again and again, till presently the bruised heart begins slowly to feel that it is infinitely loved, and is being led each step by a love compared with which the strongest love it ever felt is as a glow-worm's sparkle compared with the sun at noon.

There is no pain which the thought of the Divine Fatherhood will not assuage. But what shall they do who cannot avail themselves of its consolations--or will not? To suffer at the whim of an adverse fate; to be the sport of circumstances and things; to be unable to find a hand reached out in the dark; to miss the Father; to look up and not be able to realize that a Person is shaping the life-course--this must be suffering so acute to test the power of endurance to breaking.

None have the right to call God "Father" after this inner sense, save those who have been born into his family through the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. Only to those who believe does He give the right to become sons of God. Only those who are led by the Spirit of God may enjoy that Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father! But where this right has been conceded, there is the further privilege of counting on the Divine Fatherhood in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment.

But, beside this appeal to and belief in the Father's heart, there is the further solace of willing his will. We may not delight in it; but we can will it. We may not understand it; but we can choose it. It is simply marvellous what rest comes into both heart and life when once the soul dares to look into the Father's face, and cry, I want nothing outside the enclosure of thy choice for me. To walk, as it were, right away from the dear circle of our own preference into the circle of his Fatherly will; to dare to abide in the cleft of that Rock; to do it while the flesh rebels and friendly voices remonstrate--there is nothing like this to cure the heartache. Then the pain begins to assuage; the evil one finding himself discredited ceases to annoy; the judgment is cleared of silt which had spoilt its crystalline beauty; and life begins to assume something of its old buoyancy, enriched and deepened and purified by the ordeal through which it has come.

III. THE PETITIONS OF THE TROUBLED SOUL

It is the human nature of Jesus which speaks first. Save Me from this hour. There is something here of the same spirit as

afterwards cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." So terrible was it to become the Substitute for human sin, that it seemed as if all that was merely human in Him could not possibly endure.

It brings our Master very near to us. Often in the process of fitting us for higher service, or in the prosecution of his plans for ourselves and others, God brings us to a point where all our own courage and strength collapse. We feel as if we cannot go on for another inch. Dazzling as the prospect is beyond, we despair of ever wading through the deep waters that lie between. Granted that the welcome shouts to the conqueror are worth a hell of pain, yet how is one to get through that fiery lava-stream which seethes right before the feet? At such times the soul is tempted to say, Save me from this hour; lead me by an easier path; let me forego the prize, if only I may miss the conflict.

How good and wise it is of our God not to answer such prayers! He hears them, and ponders them, and replies to their spirit. Not for one moment, because He loves us too well, will He allow us to miss the great purpose of blessing that He has in view; but He draws near to our trembling, shrinking nature, and pours in such marvellous strength as we had never dreamed of. We find ourselves calm, self-possessed, restful, almost joyous, in circumstances which, as we had considered them from a distance, had seemed utterly intolerable. Amid a fiery current of pain we are so vividly conscious of the presence of the Son of Man, that we are actually reluctant to leave it. In the deprivation of all that men prize we actually enumerate our unsearchable satisfaction and wealth. And so we bless God for that from which we had asked to be saved. There are thousands of believers who can verify these statements from their own experience.

As we consider these facts we are driven to cancel all thought about ourselves, and to turn to God with the cry, Father, glorify thy name!

We have before seen how this desire was ever uppermost with the Son of Man. He would do and suffer anything with that in view. From heaven He engages to answer any prayer which tallies with that supreme ambition of his being. Happy shall we be if it is the supreme ambition of ours also.

"Father, glorify thy name. I will not seek my own comfort or deliverance, I simply dare not; but I am willing, in thy strength, and because I love Thee so, to suffer anything, if only thy glory may be promoted, so that men may think better of Thee, because of what they see in me." What a battle-cry is this--Father, glorify thy name! How it must thrill the hosts of heaven, as they see some dauntless soul descending into death, with these words upon the lips. How it must strike amazement and panic into the hosts of hell! Scaevola held his hand in the flame till it was burnt to ashes, to show the stuff of which Romans were made; and here is the spirit of all God's saints. To ignore the shrinking flesh, to trample it in the dust, to nail it to the cross; to follow the path, clearly pointed by the will of God; to charge into the valley of death, whilst destruction is belched from the cannon's mouth, "here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Then came a voice from the clear April sky. It seemed like thunder to the awestruck crowds who heard the noise but could not detect the sense, as the beasts who hear the noise of our speech, but to whom it is perfectly unintelligible. It well gathered up the results of his life and death: of the former it said, I have glorified it; of the second it said, and will glorify it again. The revenue of glory accruing to God from this small planet is vastly greater than when Jesus became incarnate; and it is yet to gather till a very storm of hallelujahs breaks in thundering waves of praise around the sapphire throne.

Let us gird up our loins, my brothers, to take the way God leads us, though the brake is thorny, and the path almost impassable; let us never cease to cry, especially when we must speak to vent our anguish, "Father, glorify thy name"; let us call thus out to one another through the darkness, till the gloom becomes vocal with many voices, encouraging the pilgrim host: and then as the morning breaks we shall find ourselves at the margin of the sea of glass, crying, with the redeemed host, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever!"

2 THE WORLD AND ITS PRINCE

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."--John 12:31.

THE Logos was still in the current of thought about his approaching death, which had been suggested by the inquiry of the Greeks. He is speaking from the standpoint of his cross, and as if He were already crucified.

What a strange new rendering He gives to the appearances of that day! It would seem as if He were standing at the bar of the world for judgment; receiving its verdict from the lips of Caiaphas, representing its religion; and of Pilate, representing its government: that verdict being registered in the heading of his cross, which was written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. And it would seem also as if He were being cast out of the world, as the king's son was cast out of the vineyard and slain by the wicked husbandmen; and that this were the decisive crisis in his existence, and not in his only, but also in that of the few who owned Him as Master.

But none of these things were really so. The world, not He, was being judged. It was standing before Him for his verdict; not He before the world for its judgment. Caiaphas and Pilate, and all the course of this world whom they represented, were passing in long procession before his judgment throne, and were being manifested and judged. And as for the casting out--that was the precise penalty being meted out to the Prince of the World, who wrought beneath those scenes of hate, and treachery, and blood. He, not Christ, was being cast out; cast out potentially, though perhaps the fullness of his sentence has not been meted out to him in actual suffering. Little as they guessed it, the day of Calvary and its cross was the crisis and turning-point of the history of earth and hell, of men and devils; and settled for evermore the question of supremacy between darkness and light, death and life, hate and love.

I. THE WORLD.

The Lord gave a new meaning to this word. We use it of our planet, or of the populations of men that cover its surface. He used it for the spirit of human society; for the course and trend of its thinkings and activities. Take any section, however small, of the great world of men, and carefully study it, and you will discover the presence of an indefinable spirit which sways all hearts, and influences all lives. It is difficult to say what it is. It is something in the air. Men call it fashion, or the spirit of the age. But whatever it is, it determines their pleasures, their opinions, their method of life, and their very dress. This is what our Lord meant when He spoke of the world. And it is probable that the world of one age is as nearly as possible the world of all the ages. There is nothing new under the sun.

The majority of men born into this world are so familiar with this subtle influence that they yield to and grow up in it, from the earliest moments of consciousness; and are unaware of the strength of the current by which they are being carried along. It is only when we are no longer of the world, because chosen out of it, and identified with Christ, that we learn how masterful the spirit of worldliness can be--imperious in compelling obedience; haughty if disobeyed; virulent and deadly in its hate.

This world-spirit met our Lord in full force. At first it sought to fascinate Him with its charm, and by its witchery to beguile Him from the rough path that He had chosen. The crowds thronged his footsteps. The leaders of religious thought were found in his audiences, and invited Him to their homes. The people proposed to make Him king by acclamation. And all the land seemed to lie at his feet.

Then, as its soft fascination failed, the world turned to fight against Him, and oppose his every step. Where flowers had strewn his pathway, jagged stones lay thick. Where pleasant voices had uttered their flatteries, the air was full of murmurs and threats. Where smiles had shed their sunbeams, there frowns and averted faces lined his path downward into the valley of shadows. In his own words we have the results of his experience: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you."

But in either case our Lord overcame the world. Its blandishments did not divert Him from his chosen path, and neither did its frowns. It did its utmost and failed; and as He stood at the foot of his cross, whither He had come, notwithstanding all, He raised the shout of victory, "I have overcome the world!" (John 16:33).

When He died, the world was judged. Its inner motive was unveiled. There could be no longer any doubt as to its true meaning and character. It had come into collision with the Eternal God, representing the life of heaven; and had flung itself against Him in frantic opposition. In condemning Him it had condemned itself; and henceforth none of those who loved Him and the Father that sent Him, could love it or ally themselves with it. The citizens of Edinburgh hooted Mary Queen of Scots, because she wedded Bothwell, the murderer of her first husband, Darnley: and shall not they be convicted of falsehood and treachery who profess to love the Son of God, but in their hearts love the world which cast Him out? Take heart, all ye whom the world knows not! it is fair to presume that you have been chosen out of the world and called to be the sons of God. And as for you, who are entangled in its current and enamoured of its lusts, take heed lest you be proved to have neither part nor lot with Him! (John 17:14, 15, 16; 1John 2:15, 16).

II. THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD.

There is no doubt as to who is indicated by this significant phrase. Frequently Satan, the arch-enemy of man, is thus referred to by our Lord; as for instance when He said: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." And when in the Temptation the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said : "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me," the Lord did not challenge his statement and charge him with falsehood, but by his silence apparently acquiesced in the proud boast.

What does it mean? Are we to believe, as some tell us, that in primeval ages, before sin and death had entered the fair universe, he who is now a fallen spirit, but then a bright archangel, was the appointed ruler and vice regent of our world, which flashed with undimmed beauty in the bright sisterhood of worlds; and that when he lost his first estate, he nevertheless retained his supremacy, bringing desolation and evil on all that is connected with the world he rules? It may be so. It is not impossible that the prime object which underlies the divine scheme of redemption is to cast him out of the position which he has usurped, and to bring our world

again under the benign sway of heaven. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

But the task must have been one of tremendous difficulty. Of course the evil one could not be cast out simply by the exercise of such omnipotence as made the worlds; because the sphere of conflict was not the material, but the spiritual. And the conditions of the conflict were greatly aggravated by the fact that Satan had misled our race to love and trust him. Thus it befell that God had not only to dispossess him of a power which he was no longer competent to wield; but to do so in the face of the sworn fealty and allegiance rendered him by the children of the human race.

The world of which we have been speaking is the stratagem by which the devil holds the souls of men in thrall. He does not obtrude himself, as that would alarm them and defeat his purpose; but he conceals himself beneath the course of this world, with which he is identified by the Apostle (Eph. 2:2). The world is to Satan what the web is the spider, the bait to the angler, the lure to the fowler. Very specious and attractive were the appearances and the religious professions of the world; but Christ tore the veil from it and revealed its true nature, so that we might be no longer cajoled by its appearances.

But it behoved God to do more than expose the hollowness of the world; it was needful that He should assume our nature, so as to meet and vanquish the devil on his chosen battle-ground, and in the race that he had seduced. This is the clue to the Incarnation. This explains the conflict which raged so fiercely throughout the Lord's brief early ministry. This throws light on the extraordinary way in which the devil was permitted to possess the bodies of men, like so many garrisoned castles. This may cast a light also on much of the agony through which our Lord passed; the evidence of conflict with a hidden foe, as the beach is strewn with wreckage after a night of storm.

Mark the point which had to be decided. I suppose the devil never doubted for a moment that God was stronger than he; but it had to be settled in actual conflict whether God were strong enough to expel him from men who accepted and loved his rule, and whether man could ever be made strong enough to withstand and vanquish him. Was the devil to be for ever supreme over man; or could man ever become supreme over the devil, his hosts, and the world through which he wrought?

Wonderful promises gem the pages of Holy Writ, to the effect that man would some day be more than the devil's match. The earliest promise foreshadowed this; when speaking of the woman's Seed, God said. "It shall bruise thy head." The psalmist celebrated this blessed reversal of what threatened to be perpetual, when he assured the man who dwelt in God's secret place that He should tread on the lion and adder, and trample the young lion and the dragon beneath his feet (Ps 91:13). Our Lord foresaw the downfall of Satan as lightning from heaven; and promised to give his disciples power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). The Apostle assured his converts that the God of Peace would shortly bruise Satan under their feet (Rom 16:20).

And all these strange predictions were more than realized in the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Ascension of the Son of God. In his death He destroyed him that had the power of death--that is, the devil. From the grave He came bearing at his girdle the keys of Hades. And at his Ascension his triumph was consummated. Comparing Eph. 1:21 with John 6:12, in the latter of which the same expressions are used of evil spirits that are used in the former of the powers above which Christ was raised, it is fair to infer that his Ascension was resisted by the re-gathering of the broken squadrons of evil for one last assault, but in vain.

It was not wonderful that God should go to God--that the Son should hasten to the Father: and if this had been all, the devil would probably never have sought to stay it. But the matter in dispute then, which was to be laid at rest for ever, was, whether our race should be supreme; whether devils should be put beneath the feet of redeemed men; whether our nature should pass regnant and victorious to the heart of the Throne, into the rare air of which no created thing had ever dared to intrude.

And this is what the Lord's Ascension established for all time. In the grave, the Son of God took human nature into indissoluble union with Himself; more completely, as it appears to me, than even in his Incarnation. In this He took on Him the nature of man; in that He took the nature of man into Himself, and from the brow of Olivet bore it upward to the Throne. If angel-hosts came to greet Him, they were doomed to fall back, as He reached the furthest bounds where their created natures could follow. But as for the human nature which He had made one with Himself, He took that with Him into the very focus of the majesty of God. This, then, is the marvellous result--that our nature is supreme in Him; over all other natures, celestial and terrestrial, whether they be thrones, or dominions, principalities, or powers.

It is very wonderful. We are told that our earth is utterly insignificant amid the myriads of the stars, and our race as the animalculae, whole kingdoms of which exist in a single drop of water. But bigness is not greatness, nor smallness insignificance. And it has pleased God to select our planet as the nursery of the seed-royal, whose nature is shared by his Son for ever.

In his Ascension our Lord showed that He had acquired as man the power to overthrow and cast out the devil. As a matter of fact, it is probable that he was cast out from the presence-chamber of God, where he had accused Job, and the high priest Joshua, and others of the saints. He was cast out into the heavenly places, where he is still prince of the power of the air, until Christ descends

thither with his Church. He shall then be cast out into the earth with great wrath, knowing that his hour has come; and he shall afterwards be cast down into the bottomless pit, and finally into the lake of fire. The Lord's death and ascension did potentially that which He has been realizing actually ever since.

This is a fertile subject for holy meditation and for practical help; because if the Lord has cast Satan out of his strongholds, He will be able to cast him out also from every soul of man that offers itself to Him, appealing for deliverance.

Take heart, O child of God, tempted and tried; your Lord is more than a match for all the power of evil! "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Let Him effect your emancipation, and chase your foe from all his strongholds within, until he be utterly cast out, and you entirely delivered.

3 THE TRUE LIGHT OF GOD'S CHILDREN

"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." John 12:35-36.

THE LIVE of the Lord Jesus was bathed through and through with the Light of God. He was Light, because God is Light; and God filled Him as the light fills the pure transparent air. It was enough for Him that God should shine through his being, as through a transparent medium; nothing being added or subtracted from the intensity and glory of his rays. To believe on Him was to believe on God. To see Him was to see God. To hear Him speak was to hear what the Father had said to Him, and was saying to men through Him (John 12:44, 45, 49).

Light is so beautiful, so pure, so gladdening, so gentle in its all-pervasiveness, so mysterious in its sevenfold web of colour! What better could set forth the nature of Him who is the express image of God's Person; and, therefore, the beam of his glory! And in this, as the element of our being, we were meant to spend our lives, having no part dark; but saturated with the radiant inshining of Him who gathers up in Himself, after a spiritual fashion, all those qualities which naturally we ascribe to light. There are, however, three injunctions here to which we must conform, if we would know the blessedness to which our Lord refers as being possible to us.

I. BELIEVE IN THE LIGHT.

There is no moment, no duty, no trial in life, in which the Lord Jesus is not present. You may not see Him; but, nevertheless, He is there. No furnace, but the Son of Man treads upon the glowing embers. No storm, but the Master walks over the turbulent billows. No isle of banishment, but the Lord is near the lonely exile. It may be that we do not see Him, or hear his voice; but we must believe. We must dare to believe on the strength of his own assurances, and in spite of all appearances to the contrary. Did He not say, "Lo! I am with you alway"?

It is much when men begin to study the acts and promises of Christ as indicating his character. This is what we all do at the outset with every new friendship which comes into our life. We are not quite certain of our new-found acquaintance, and we eagerly question each trait and indication of what He is. But after a while we have formed our mental conception, and are no longer on the alert. We have passed behind the actions to the character, and we rest there. We are not always looking to find Him out; sight is exchanged for faith.

So we must not only believe that Christ is in all, but we must go on to believe that He is light; that in all the bitter and painful experiences of life He is always love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness; and that He is conducting us surely and safely into the truest, gladdest, and most perfect life. This, surely, is something at least of the meaning contained in the words, "Believe in the light."

II. OBEY THE LIGHT.

Walk in obedience to its laws (John 12:35).

What a true word Mary spoke at Cana, when she said to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it"! She must have learnt that lesson out of those long, quiet, blessed years at Nazareth. Often she had been unable to understand some deep word of his, and had been compelled to content herself with just doing some obvious duty to which He pointed; and as she did it, all became clear. She knew that there was no such way of understanding Him, as by rendering Him literal obedience; and she passed on the results of her experience to us all. And how often has this taken place since! We have eagerly thought and read about the Master, trying to penetrate into the deep mystery of his nature, but baffled and rebuffed; but when we have set ourselves to obey some simple injunction, and to do the duty which lay next to us, all our doubts have dispersed, and being willing to do his will we have known of the doctrine. Men would never know what the forces of Nature can do for them except by setting themselves to obey

them. And it is so in relation to Christ and the laws of his spiritual realm.

All over the world men are asking how they may come to know Christ; and there is but one answer: "Believe that He loves you; that He is prompting you by his good Spirit; that He is breathing through every yearning and perception of the better life. Dare to obey all these; follow them whither they point; walk in the fight which streams forth from them, and which really has its origin and fount in Him; and you will come to know the Light, and to be changed into its image."

The light of Christ is always distinguishable because it means the next duty, the deepest impression of what is right, the clearest conviction of the will of God. It may be that even now, as you read these lines, there is some duty you shirk; some cross you refuse to lift; some act from which you flinch. You have no doubt about it. And though you may not have directly associated it with Him, yet you cannot doubt that if you did it He would be pleased. It is useless to try to know Him until that nearest act of obedience is wrought; but directly it is, He will become clearer than any words could portray. "Walk while ye have the light"; so you will know the fight and become fight in the Lord.

How different is this teaching from that of the word around! There we are bidden to know, before we dare to entrust our lives to any leader or commander, whatever be his fair speeches and promises; but Christ bids us obey the first glimmer of light breaking on us through the words of a friend, or the summons of Inspiration, or the promptings of the Spirit; and He undertakes that if we do, we shall not walk in darkness, but shall know whither we go, and shall have the Light of Life.

Disobedience like scales veils Christ from us; whilst obedience leads us into his very presence. The judgment always becomes just, and the vision clear, when we deny ourselves, and set ourselves to follow whatsoever things are true, just, pure, and of good report.

III. BECOME CHILDREN OF LIGHT (John 12:36).

It is wonderful how soon we become like what we love and pursue. Love appropriates and fixes the tones and gestures and thoughts of the one that is loved. As the fish resemble the bottom on which they lie, and as the Arctic hares change with the colour of their world, so do hearts and lives take on the complexion of the people and things which predominate and preponderate in their daily experience.

So let it be in your relation to the Lord Jesus, who indeed is the true Light of souls, "lightening every man that cometh into the world." Think of Him. Imitate Him. Ask continually what He would wish. Saturate your mind with his words and teaching. Live up to his will so far as you know it. Obey Him to the uttermost. And there will come a growing resemblance between you and Him. You will be transformed, as you behold, into his likeness. Men, as they come into contact with you, will be constrained to admit that his character has become transfused with yours, and to acknowledge you as a child of the light.

Oh to descend into the world each morning as sunbeams from the fount of day!--bearing with us something of the beauty of the world from which we come: shedding joy and blessedness on dark hearts: and living lives as transparent, as beautiful, as unobtrusive, and as helpful in our measure as his was, from whom we have received all we have and are.

But let us remember that if we refuse the solicitations and promptings of his Spirit, our hearts will become hard, and our eyes blind. There are some mentioned in this paragraph who believed in Him but would not confess Him, and loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. How could such men enter into the fullness of his blessed light? Was it not inevitable that it should become dim?

Live up to all you know, and you will know more and resemble Him more perfectly; and when kings die, and nations rock to ruin, and all nature is out of joint, you will see the King seated on his throne amid the worship of the Seraphim, and you will begin to live with his Life, to reflect his Light, and to love with his Love. And the day of those blessed experiences shall never wane, or be overcast by the gathering twilight, but shall glow with magnificent splendour; suns glimmering far beneath as the flash of fire-flies; the raptures of earth remembered as the pastimes of childish joy; whilst through eternal ages we shall follow the Lamb deeper into the heart of his own ineffable bliss--in Him, with Him, like Him, for ever!

4 THE LAVER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

"He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."
John 13:5

IN THE court of the Temple there were two objects that arrested the eye of the entering worshipper--the brazen altar, and the laver. The latter was kept always full of pure, fresh water, for the constant washings enjoined by the Levitical code. Before the priests were consecrated for their holy work, and attired in the robes of the sacred office, they washed there (Ex. 29:4). Before they entered the Holy Place in their ordinary ministry, and before Aaron, on the great Day of Atonement, proceeded to the Most Holy

Place, with blood, not his own, it was needful to conform to the prescribed ablutions. "He shall bathe his flesh in water" (Lev. 16:4).

First, then, the Laver, and then the Holy Place; the order is irreversible, and the teaching of the types is as exact as mathematics. Hence, when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews invites us to draw near, and make our abode in the Most Holy Place, he carefully obeys the Divine order, and bids us "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

In this scene (John 13:1-14), on the eve of our Lord's betrayal, we find the spiritual counterpart of the Laver, and in the following chapters we stand in the Presence-Chamber.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCE THAT LED TO THIS ACT OF LOVE.

In order fully to understand this touching incident, it is necessary to remember the circumstances out of which it sprang. On the way from Bethany to the upper room in which the Supper had been prepared, and on entering therein, our Lord must have been deeply absorbed in the momentous events in which He was to be the central figure; but He was not unmindful of a contention which had engaged his disciples, for they had been disputing one with another as to which of them should be the greatest. The proud spirit of the flesh, which so often cursed the little group, broke out in this awful hour with renewed energy; as though the prince of this world would inflict a parting blow on his great Antagonist, through those whom He loved best. It was as if Satan said, "See the results of thy tears and teaching, of thy prayers and pleadings; the love which Thou hast so often inculcated is but a passing sentiment, that has never rooted itself in the soil of these wayward hearts. It is a plant too rare and exotic for the climate of earth. Take it back with Thee to thine own home if Thou wilt, but seek not to achieve the impossible."

It was heartrending that this exhibition of pride should take place just at this juncture. These were the men who had been with Him in his temptations, who had had the benefit of his most careful instructions, who had been exposed to the full influence of his personal character; and yet, notwithstanding all, the rock-bed of pride, that cast the angels down from heaven, that led to the fall of man, obtruded itself. This occasion in which it manifested itself was very inopportune; already the look of Calvary was on the Saviour's face, and the sword entering his heart. Surely, they must have been aware that the shadow of the great eclipse was already passing over the face of their Sun. But even this did not avail to restrain the manifestation of their pride. Heedless of three years of example and teaching; unrestrained by the symptoms of our Lord's sorrow; unchecked by the memory of happy and familiar intercourse, which should have bound them for ever in a united brotherhood, they wrangled with high voices and hot faces, with the flashing eye and clenched fist of the Oriental, as to who should be first.

And if pride thus asserted itself after such education, and under such circumstances, let us be sure that it is not far away from any one of us. We do not now contend in so many words for the chief places; courtesy, politeness, fear of losing the respect of our fellows, restrain us. But our resentment to the fancied slight, or the assumption by another of work which we thought our own; our sense of hurt when we are put aside; our jealousy and envy; our detracting speeches, and subtle insinuations of low motive, all show how much of this loveless spirit rankles in our hearts. We have been planted in the soil of this world, and we betray its flavour; we have come of a proud stock, and we betray our heredity.

II. LOVE'S SENSITIVENESS TO SIN ON THE PART OF ITS BELOVED

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Consider these epithets of the love of Christ:

It was unusually tender.

When the hour of departure approaches, though slight reference be made to it, love lives with the sound of the departing wheels or the scream of the engine always in its ear; and there are given a tenderness to the tone, a delicacy to the touch, a thoughtfulness for the heartache of those from whom it is to be parted, which are of inexpressible beauty. All that was present with Christ. He was taking that Supper with them before He suffered. He knew that He would soon depart out of this world unto the Father. His ear was specially on the alert, his nature keenly alive, his heart thrilling with unusual tenderness, as the sands slowly ran out from the hourglass.

It was supreme love.

"Having loved his own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

These last words have been thought to refer to the end of life, but it surely were superfluous to tell us that the strong waters of death could not quench the love of the Son of Man. When once He loves, He loves always. It is needless to tell us that the Divine heart which has enshrined a soul will not forsake it; that the name of the beloved is never erased from the palms of the hands; that the covenant is not forgotten though eternity elapse. Of course Christ loves to the end, even though that end reaches to

endlessness. We do not need to be assured that the Immortal Lover, who has once taken us into union with Himself, can never loose his hold. Therefore it is better to adopt the alternative suggested by the margin of the Revised Version, "He loved them to the uttermost." There was nothing to be desired. Nothing was needed to fill out the ideal of perfect love. Not a stitch was required for the needle-work of wrought gold; not a touch demanded for the perfectly achieved picture; not a throb added to the strong pulse of affection with which He regarded his own.

It is very wonderful that He should have loved such men like this. As we pass them under review at this time of their life, they seem a collection of nobodies--with the exception perhaps of John and Peter. But they were his own, there was a special relationship between Him and them. They had belonged to the Father, and He had given them to the Son as his special perquisite and belonging. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." May we dare, in this meaning, to apply to Christ that sense of proprietorship, which makes a bit of moorland waste, a few yards of garden-ground, dear to the freeholder?

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own?"

It was because these men were Christ's own, that the full passion of his heart set in towards them, and He loved them to the utmost bound; that is, the tides filled the capacity of the ocean-bed of possibility.

It was bathed in the sense of his Divine origin and mission.-The curtain was waxing very thin. It was a moment of vision. There had swept across his soul a realisation of the full meaning of his approaching triumph. He looked back, and was hardly conscious of the manger where the horned oxen fed, of the lowly birth, of the obscure years, in the sublime conception that He had come forth from God. He looked forward, and was hardly conscious of the cross, the nail, the thorn-crown, and the spear, because of the sublime consciousness that He was stepping back, to go to Him with whom He realised his identity. He looked on through the coming weeks, and knew that the Father had given all things into his hands. What the devil had offered as the price of obeisance to himself, that the Father was about to give Him--nay, had already given Him--as the price of his self-emptying. And if for a moment He stooped, as we shall see He did, to the form of a servant, it was not because of any failure to recognise his high dignity and mission, but with the sense of Godhead quick on his soul.

The love which went out towards this little group of men had Deity in it. It was the love of the Throne, of the glory He had with the Father before the worlds were, of that which now fills the bosom of his ascended and glorified nature.

He was aware of the task to which He was abandoning these men.--He knew that as He was the High Priest over the house of God, they were its priests. He knew that cleansing was necessary before they could receive the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He knew that the great work of carrying forward his Gospel was to be delegated to their hands. He knew that they were to carry the sacred vessels of the Gospel, which must not be blurred or fouled by contact with human pride or uncleanness. He knew that the very mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary would be inexplicable, and that none might stand on that holy hill, save those that had clean hands and a pure heart. And because of all this, He turned to them, by symbol and metaphor, to impress upon their heart and memory the necessity of participating in the cleansing of which the Laver is the type.

The highest love is ever quickest to detect the failures and inconsistencies of the beloved. Just because of its intensity, it can be content with nothing less than the best, because the best means the blesseddest; and it longs that the object of its thought should be most blessed for ever. It is a mistake to think that green-eyed jealousy is quickest to detect the spots on the sun, the freckles on the face, and the jarring discords in the music of the life; love is quicker, more microscopic, more exacting that the ideal should be achieved. Envy is content to indicate the fault, and leave it; but love detects, and waits and holds its peace until the fitting opportunity arrives, and then sets itself to remove, with its own tenderest ministry, the defect which had spoilt the completeness and beauty of its object.

Perhaps there had never been a moment in the human consciousness of our Lord, when, side by side with this intense love for his own, there had been so vivid a sense of oneness with his Father, of his unity with the source of Infinite Purity and Blessedness. We might have supposed that this would have alienated Him from his poor friends, but in this our thoughts are not as his. Just because of his awful holiness, He was quick to perceive the unholiness of his friends, and could not endure it, and essayed to rid them of it. Just because of his Divine goodness, He could detect the possibilities of goodness in them, and be patient enough to give it culturing care.

The most perfect musician may be most tortured by incompetence; but he will be most likely to detect true merit, and give time to its training. "The powerfulest magnet will pick out, in the powdered dust of the ironstone, fine particles of metal that a second or third rate magnet would fail to draw to itself." Do not dread the awful holiness of Jesus; it is your hope. He will never be content till He has made you like Himself; and side by side with his holiness, never fail to remember his gentle, tender love.

III. THE DIVINE HUMILITY, THAT COPES WITH HUMAN SIN.

"He riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and He took a towel and girded Himself."

This is what the Apostle calls taking upon Himself the form of a servant. The charm of the scene is its absolute simplicity. You cannot imagine Christ posturing to the ages. There was no aiming at effect, no thought of the beauty or humility of the act, as there is when the Pope yearly washes the feet of twelve beggars, from a golden basin, wiping them with a towel of rarest fabric. Christ did not act thus for show or pretence, but with an absolutely single purpose of fulfilling a needed office. And in this He set forth the spirit of our redemption.

This is the key to the Incarnation.

With slight alteration the words will read truly of that supreme act. He rose from the Throne; laid aside the garments of light which He had worn as his vesture; took up the poor towel of humanity, and wrapped it about his glorious Person; poured his own blood into the basin of the cross; and set Himself to wash away the foul stains of human depravity and guilt.

As pride was the source of human sin, Christ must needs provide an antidote in his absolute humility--a humility which could not grow beneath these skies, but must be brought from the world where the lowliest are the greatest, and the most childlike reign as kings.

This is the key to every act of daily cleansing.

We have been washed--once, definitely and irrevocably, we have been bathed in the crimson tide that flows from Calvary; but we need a daily cleansing. Our feet become soiled with the dust of life's highways; our hands grimy, as our linen beneath the rain of filth in a great city; our lips --as the white doorstep of the house--are fouled by the incessant throng of idle, unseemly and fretful words; our hearts cannot keep unsoiled the stainless robes with which we pass from the closet at morning prime. Constantly we need to repair to the Laver to be washed. But do we always realise how much each act of confession on our part involves from Christ on his? Whatever important work He may at that moment have on hand; whatever directions He may be giving to the loftiest angels for the fulfilment of his purposes; however pressing the concerns of the Church or the universe upon his broad shoulders--He must needs turn from all these to do a work He will not delegate. Again He stoops from the Throne, and girds Himself with a towel; and, in all lowliness, endeavours to remove from thee and me the stain which his love dare not pass over. He never loses the print of the nails; He never forgets Calvary and the blood; He never spends one hour without stooping to do the most menial work of cleansing filthy souls. And it is because of this humility He sits on the Throne and wields the sceptre over hearts and worlds.

This is the key to our ministry to each other.

I have often thought that we do not often enough wash one another's feet. We are conscious of the imperfections which mar the characters of those around us. We are content to note, criticise, and learn them. We dare not attempt to remove them. This failure arises partly because we do not love with a love like Christ's--a love which will brave resentment, annoyance, rebuke, in its quest,--and partly because we are not willing to stoop low enough.

None can remove the mote of another, so long as the beam is left in the eye, and the sin unjudged in the life. None can cleanse the stain, who is not willing to take the form of a servant, and go down with bare knees upon the floor. None is able to restore those that are overtaken in a fault, who does not count himself the chief of sinners and the least of saints.

We need more of this lowly, loving spirit: not so sensitive to wrong and evil as they affect us, as anxious for the stain they leave on the offender. It is of comparatively small consequence how much we suffer; it is of much importance that none of Christ's disciples should be allowed to go on for a moment longer, with unconfessed and unjudged wrongs clouding his peace, and hindering the testimony which he might give. Let us therefore watch for each other's souls: let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works; let us in all sincerity do as Christ has done, washing each other's feet in all humility and tender love. But this spirit is impossible save through fellowship with the Lamb of God, and the reception of his holy, humble nature into the inmost heart, by the Holy Ghost.

5 HEAVEN DELAYED BUT GUARANTEED

"Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards."--John 13:36.

THESE chapters are holy ground. The last words of our dearest, spoken in the seclusion of the death-chamber to the tear-stained group gathered around, are not for all the world, and are recorded only for those whose love makes them able to appreciate. And what are these words that now begin to flow from the Master's lips, but his last to his own. They were held back so long as Judas

was there. There was a repression caused by his presence which hindered the interchange of confidence; but, when he was gone, Love hastened to her secret stores, and drew forth her choicest, rarest viands to share them, that they might be in after days a strength and solace.

This marvellous discourse, which begins in John 13:31, continues through John 14., 15., 16., and closes in the sublime prayer of John 17. Better that all the literature of the world should have shared the fate of the Alexandrian library, than that these precious words should have been lost amid the fret of the ages.

The Lord commences his discourse by speaking of his speedy departure. "Little children," He said, using a term which indicated that He felt towards them a parental tenderness, and spoke as a dying father might have done to the helpless babes that gathered around his bed, "I am to be with you for a very little time longer; the sand has nearly run out in the hour-glass. I know you will seek Me; your love will make you yearn to be with Me where I am, to continue the blessed intimacy, the ties which within the last few weeks have been drawn so much closer; but it will not be possible. As I said to the Jews, so I must say to you, Whither I go, ye cannot come." He then proceeds to give them a new commandment of love, as though He said: "The cannot which prevents you following Me now is due to a lack of perfect love on your part, as well as for other reasons; it is necessary, therefore, that you wait to acquire it, ere you can be with Me where I am."

Simon Peter hardly hears Him uttering these last words; he is pondering too deeply what he has just heard, and calls the Master back to that announcement, as though He had passed it with too light a tread: "Going away! Lord, whither goest Thou?" To that question our Lord might have given a direct answer: "Heaven! The Father's bosom! The New Jerusalem! The City of God!" Any of these would have been sufficient; but instead, He says in effect: "It is a matter of comparative indifference whither I go; I have no wish to feed curiosity with descriptions of things in the heavens, which you could not understand. The main point for you, in this brief life, is to become assimilated to Me in humility, devotion, likeness, and character, that you may be able to be my companion and friend in those new paths on which I am entering, as you have been in those which I am now leaving. 'Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.'"

The words staggered Peter; he could not understand what Christ meant; he could not see how much had to be done before he could share in Christ's coming glory. He made the same mistake as James and John had made before, and wanted the throne, without perceiving that it was conditioned on fellowship in the cup and the baptism into death. With deep emotion he persisted in his inquiries: "Why cannot I follow Thee now? There is no place on earth to which I would not go with Thee. Have I not already left all to follow Thee? Have I not been with Thee on the Transfiguration Mount, as well as in thy journeyings? There is but one experience through which I have not passed with Thee, and that is death; but if that stands next in thy life-plan, I will lay down my life for thy sake. Anything to be with Thee."

How little Peter knew himself! How much better did Christ know him. "What! dost thou profess thyself willing to die with Me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt deny Me thrice, between now and cock-crow to-morrow morning." These words silenced Peter for all the evening afterwards. He does not appear to have made another remark, but was absorbed in heart breaking grief; though all the while there rang in his heart those blessed words of hope : "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards"--words which our Lord caught up and expanded for the comfort of them all; for now for the first time they realised that they were about to be parted from Jesus, and were almost beside themselves with grief: "Let not your heart be troubled."

I. THE DESIRE TO BE WITH CHRIST.

This was paramount. These simple men had little thought of heaven as such. If Christ had begun to speak of golden pavement, gates of pearl, and walls of chrysolite, they would have turned from his glowing words with the one inquiry, "Wilt Thou be there?" If that question had been answered uncertainly, they would have turned away heart-sick, saying: "If Thou art not there, we have no desire for it; but if Thou wert in the darkest, dreariest spot in the universe, it would be heaven to us."

There were three desires, the strands of which were woven in this one yearning desire and prayer to be with Christ. They wanted his love, his teaching, his leading into full, richer life. And is not this our position also? We want Christ, not hereafter only, but here and now, for these three self-same reasons.

We want his love.

There is no love like his--so pure and constant and satisfying. What the sun is to a star, and the ocean to a pool left by the retiring tide, such is the love of Jesus compared with all other love. To have it is superlative blessedness; to miss it is to thirst for ever.

We want his light.

He speaks words that cast light on the mysteries of existence, on the dark problems of life, on the perplexing questions which are perpetually knocking at our doors.

We want his life.

Fuller and more abundant life is what we crave. It is of life that our veins are scant. We desire to have the mighty tides of Divine life always beating strongly within us, to know the energy, vigour, vitality of God's life in the soul. And we are conscious that this is to be found only in Him.

Therefore we desire to be with Him, to drink deeper into his fellowship, to know Him and the power of his resurrection, to be brought into an abidingness from which we shall never recede. We have known Christ after the flesh; we desire to know Him after the Spirit. We have known Him in humiliation; we want to know Him in his glory. We have known Him as the Lamb of the Cross; we want to know Him as the Divine Man on the throne.

II. THE FATAL OBSTACLE TO THE IMMEDIATE GRANTING OF THESE DESIRES.

"Thou canst not follow Me now."

There is thus a difference in his words to his disciples, and those to the Jews. These also were told that they could not follow Him, but the word now was omitted. There was no hope held out to them of that great gulf being bridged. This was the cannot of moral incompatibility (John 7:34; 8:21); that, of temporary unfitness, which by the grace of God would finally pass away, and the whole of their aspirations be realised.

It is easy to see why Peter was unfit for the deeper realisation of Christ in his resurrection. Our Lord had just spoken of being glorified through death. It was as Judas left the chamber, intent on his betrayal, that Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified!" He saw that the hidden properties of his being could only be unfolded and uttered through death and resurrection. But Peter had little sympathy with this; he might avow his determination to die, but he had never really entered into the meaning of death, and all it might involve.

He could not detect evil. The traitor was beside him; but he had to ask the beloved disciple to elicit from Jesus who it might be by whom the Master would be betrayed.

He was out of sympathy with the Lord's humiliation, so that he chode with Him for stooping to wash his feet; and if he could not understand the significance and necessity of this lowly deed of love, how could he enter into the spirit of that life which was planted in death, and which bore even in resurrection the print of the nails?

He strove with the rest for the primacy. Who should be the greatest? was the question that agitated them, as the other evangelists tell us, in that solemn hour. And none that was possessed with that spirit of pride and emulation could be in harmony with that blessed world where the greatest are the lowliest, the highest the least, and the King set on the right hand of power, because more capable of humbling Himself than any beside.

But, besides all this, Peter was animated by the strong spirit of self-assertion and determination. On the lake shore he had always been able to get to the front by his stronger voice, and broader shoulders, and more vehement manner. Why should he riot do the same now? Why could he not keep pace with Christ even through the dark valley, and accompany Him through unknown worlds?

It cannot be, said Christ; you are too strong in your carnal strength, too self-reliant, too confident. It is not possible for you to be with Me in the life that springs from death, and to which death is the door, till you have deeply drunk into the spirit of my death. You are too strong to follow Me when I descend to the lowest on my way to the highest; I must take for my companion now a forgiven malefactor; but I will some day come for you, and receive you to Myself.

So Peter had to be broken on the wheel of a servant-girl's question, and humbled to the dust. In those bitter hours he was thoroughly emptied of his old proud, self-reliant, vain-glorious spirit, and became as a little child.

This must be our path also. We must descend with Christ, if we would ascend to sit at his side. We must submit to the laying of our pride in the very dust. We must accept humiliations and mortifications, the humblings of perpetual failure and shortcoming, the friction and fret of infirmity and pain; and when we have come to an end of ourselves, we shall begin to know Christ in a new and deeper fashion. He will pass by and say, "Live!" The spirit of his life will enter into us; the valley of Anchor will become a door of hope, and we shall sing God's glad new song of hope. The ideal which had long haunted us in our blood, but unable to express itself--will burst into a perfect flower of exquisite scent and hue.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF THE ULTIMATE GRATIFICATION OF EVERY DESIRE GOD HAS IMPLANTED.

This is an absolute certainty, that God inserts no desire or craving in our nature, for which there is no appropriate gratification. The birds do not seek for food which is not ready for them. The young lions do not ask for prey that is not awaiting them somewhere in the forest glade. Hence the absoluteness of that shalt--"Thou shalt follow Me afterwards." It is as if Jesus said, "I have taught you

to love Me, and long after Me; and I will certainly gratify the appetite which I have created."

Pentecost was the Divine fulfilment of all those conditions of which we have been speaking. It was not enough that Peter should be an emptied and broken man; he must become also a God-possessed, a Spirit-filled man. Thus only could he be fitted to know Christ after a spiritual sort, and to participate in his Resurrection Life. It was surely to the Advent of the Holy Ghost that our Lord referred in that significant afterwards.

We too must seek our share in Pentecost. Do not be content with "Not I"; go on to say, "but Christ." Do not be satisfied with the emptying of the proud self-life; seek the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Do not stop at the cross, or the grave; hasten to the upper room, where the disciples are baptized in fire and glory. The Holy Spirit will enable you to abide in Christ, because He will bring Christ to abide in you; and life, through his dear grace, shall be so utterly imbued with fellowship with the Blessed Lord, that, whether present or absent, you will live together with Him. It is the man who is really filled with the Spirit of God who can follow Jesus, as Peter afterwards did, to prison and to death, who can drink of the cup of which He drank, and be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized.

"Why should I fear?" asked Basil, of the Roman prefect. "Nothing you have spoken of has any effect upon me. He that hath nothing to lose is not afraid of confiscation. You cannot banish me, for the earth is the Lord's. As to torture, the first stroke would kill me; and to kill me is to send me to glory."

6 "MANY MANSIONS"

"I go to prepare a place for you."--John 14:2.

THE CURE for heart-trouble, when the future is full of dread, is faith--faith directed to Jesus; and just such faith as we give God, for He is God. He has shown Himself well worthy of that trust; all his paths towards us have been mercy and truth; and we may therefore safely rest upon his disclosures of that blessed life, of which the present is the vestibule. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says; "ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Or it might be rendered, "Believe in God, believe also in Me."

Let us listen to Him, as He discourses of the Father's house, and its many mansions.

Heaven is a home.

"My Father's house." What magic power lies in that word! It will draw the wanderer from the ends of the earth; it will nerve the sailor, the soldier, and the explorer with indomitable endurance; it will bring a mist of tears to the eyes of the hardened criminal, and soften the heart of stone. When the bands played "Home, sweet Home," one night in the trenches of the Crimea, a great sob went right through the army.

But what constitutes home? Not the mere locality or building; but the dear ones that lived there once, but are scattered never to be reunited, and only one or two of whom are spared still. It was father's house, though it was only a shepherd's shieling; he dwelt there, and mother, and our brothers and sisters. And where they dwell, or where wife and child dwell, there is home.

Such is Heaven. Think of a large family of noble children, of all ages, from the little child to the young man beginning his business career, returning after long severance to spend a season together in the old ancestral home, situated in its far-reaching grounds, and you can form some idea of what it will be when the whole Family of the Redeemed gather in the Father's house. All reserve, all shyness, all restraint gone for ever. God has given us all the memory of what home was, that we may guess at what awaits us, and be smitten with homesickness. As the German proverb puts it: "Blessed are the homesick, for they shall reach home."

Heaven is very spacious.

There are "many mansions." There is no stint in its accommodation. In the olden Temple there were spacious courts, long corridors, and innumerable chambers, in which a vast multitude could find a home day and night. The children trooped about and sang around their favourite teacher. The blind and 'lame sheltered themselves from heat or storm. The priests and Levites in great numbers lived there. And this probably suggested the Master's words.

Heaven, too, will contain immense throngs, without being crowded. It will teem with innumerable hosts of angels, and multitudes of the redeemed which no man can number. Its children will be as the grains of sand that bar the ocean's waves, or the stars that begem the vault of night. But it can easily hold these, and myriads more. Yet there is room! As age after age has poured in its crowds, still the cry has gone forth, There is abundant room! The many mansions are not all tenanted. The orchestra is not full. The complement of priests is not complete.

Do not believe those little souls, who would make you imagine that Heaven is a little place for a select few. If they come to you with that story, tell them to begone! tell them that they do not know your Father's heart; tell them that all He does must be worthy of

Himself. Jesus shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.

Heaven is lull of variety.

It is not like one great hall; there are myriads of adjacent rooms, "mansions," which will be fitted up, so to speak, differently. One for the sweet singer, another for the little ones and their teachers, another for the student of the deep mysteries of the Kingdom, another for those who may need further instruction in the mysteries of God.

Heaven's life and scenery are as various as the aptitudes and capacities of souls. Its music is not a monotone, but a chorale. It is as a home, where the parents delight to develop the special tastes of their children. This is surely what Jesus meant when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He is ever studying our special idiosyncrasies --what we need most, and can do best; and when He has ascertained it, He suits our mansion accordingly.

When a gardener is about to receive some rare exotic, he prepares a place where it will flower and fruit to the best advantage. The naturalist who is notified of the shipment of some new specimen, prepares a habitat as suited as possible to its peculiarities. The mother whose son is returning from sea, prepares a room in which his favourite books and pictures are carefully placed, and all else that her pondering heart can devise to give him pleasure. So, our Lord is anxious to give what is best in us its most suitable nourishment and training. And He will keep our place against our coming. It will not suit another, and will not be given to another.

That all this will be so, is witnessed by the instincts of our hearts; and if it had not been so, He would have told us. That little clause is inimitably beautiful; it seems to teach that where He permits his children to cherish some natural presentiment of the blessed future--its solemn troops and sweet societies; its friendships, recognitions, and fellowships; its holy service and special opportunities--He really assents to our deepest and most cherished thoughts. If it had not been so, He would have told us.

The charm of Heaven will be the Lord's presence.

"Where I am, ye shall be also."

We shall see his face, and be for ever with Him. What would not men give, if some old MSS. might turn up with new stories of his wondrous life, new parables as charming as those of the Good Shepherd and the Prodigal Son, new beatitudes, new discourses like that on the Vine. God might have permitted this. But what would it be in comparison with all that lies before! The past has lost much; but the future holds infinitely more. We shall see new Gospels enacted before our eyes, behold Christ as a real visible person in the glory of Divine manhood, hear Him speak to us as his friends, and know what He meant when He promised to gird Himself and come forth to serve his servants.

If you are in doubt as to what Heaven is like, is it not enough to know that it will be in accord with the nature and presence and choice of Jesus Christ?

After his resurrection, He spent forty days among his disciples, that men might see what the risen life was like. As He was, and is, so shall we be. His body is the pattern in accordance with which ours shall be fashioned. What He was to his friends after his resurrection, we shall be to ours, and they to us. we shall hear the familiar voices and the dear old names, shall resume the dear relationships which death severed, and shall speak again of the holy secrets of our hearts with those who were our twin-spirits.

And He will come again, either in our death hour, or in his Second Advent, "to receive us" to Himself. If we only could believe this, and trust Him who says it, our hearts would not be troubled, though death itself menaced us; for we should realise that, to be received at the moment of dissolution by the hands of Jesus, into the place on which He has lavished time and thought and love, must be "far better" than the best that earth could offer.

7 THE REALITY OF WHICH JACOB'S DREAM WAS THE SHADOW

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."--John 14:6.

WE ALL know more truth than we give ourselves credit for. A moment before the Lord had said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas the pessimist--always inclined to look at the dark side of things--directly contradicted Him, saying, "master, we are absolutely ignorant of the goal to which thy steps are bending; it is impossible, therefore, for us to know the path that lies through the gloom, and by which Thou art to come to it." This was a strange collision--the Master's "Ye know," and Thomas's "We know not." Which was right?

There is no doubt that Jesus was right, and that they did know. In many a discourse He had given sufficient materials for them to construct a true conception of the Father's house, and the way to it. These materials were lying in some dusty corner of their memory, unused, and Christ knew this. He said, therefore, in effect, "Go back to the teachings I have given you; look carefully

through the inventory of your knowledge; let your instincts, illumined by my words, supply the information you need: there are torches in your souls already lighted, that will cast a radiant glow upon the mysteries to the brink of which you have come."

This is true of us all. Christ never conducts to experiences for which He has not previously prepared us. As the great ocean-steamers take in their stores of coal and provisions, day and night, for weeks previous to their sailing; so, by insensible influences, Christ is ever anticipating the strain and stress of coming circumstance, passing in words which are spirit and life, though they may stand in their heavy packing-cases in the hold, until we are driven to unpack, examine, and use their contents. Not seldom sorrow is sent for no other purpose than to compel us to take cognisance of our possessions. Many a fabric of manufacture, many an article of diet, many an ingenious process has been suggested in days of scarcity and famine. So, old words and truths come back in our sore need. Christ often speaks to us, as a teacher to a nervous child, saying, "You know quite well, if you would only think a little." More truth is stored in memory than recollection can readily lay hands upon.

Thomas persisted in his protestations of ignorance, and so the Lord uttered for his further information the royal sentence, which sums up Christianity in the one simple pronoun "I." It was as if He said to his disciples gathered there, and to his Church in all ages, "To have Me, to know Me, to love and obey Me, this is religion; this is the light for every dark hour, the solution for all the mysteries." Christianity is more than a creed, a doctrinal system, a code of rules--it is Christ.

I. CHRIST AS THE WAY.

"I am the Way," said our Lord. The conception of life as a pilgrimage is as old as human speech. On the third page of our Bibles we are told that "Enoch walked with God." The path of the Israelites through the desert was a pilgrim's progress, and the enduring metaphor for our passage from the cross to the Sabbath-keeping. Isaiah anticipated the rearing up of a highway which should be called the way of holiness, which should not be trodden by the unclean; no lion should be there, or ravenous beast go up thereon; but the ransomed of the Lord should walk there, and go with singing to Zion. But in the furthest flights of inspired imagination, the prophet never dreamt that God Himself would stoop to become the trodden path to Himself, and that the way of holiness was no other than that Divine Servant who so often stood before him for portrayal. "I am the Way," said Christ.

He fulfils all the conditions of Isaiah's prediction. He saw a highway.

A highway is for all: for kings and commoners; for the nobleman daintily picking his way, and the beggar painfully plodding with bare feet. And Jesus is for every man. "Whosoever will, let him come"; let him step out and walk; let him commit himself to Him who comes to our doors that He may conduct us to the pearly gate.

It was a way of holiness, where no unclean or leprous person was permitted to travel. Neither can we avail ourselves of the gracious help of Christ, so long as we are harbouring what He disapproves, or doing what He forbids.

It was plain and straight, so that wayfaring men though fools could not mistake it. And the Master said, that whilst the wise and prudent might miss his salvation, babes would find it. "Hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes."

It afforded perfect immunity from harm. The wild beasts of the forest might roar around it, but they were kept off that thoroughfare by an invisible and impassable fence. Who is he that can harm us whilst we follow that which is good? The special Divine permission was necessary before Satan could tempt Job, whose heart was perfect with his God.

It was trodden with song. And who can describe the waves of joy that sometimes roll in on the believing, loving soul! There is always peace, but sometimes there is joy unspeakable and full of glory. The hands of Jesus shed the oil of gladness on our heads, whilst the lamentation and regret that haunt the lives of others are abashed, as the spectres of the night before the roseate touch of morn.

What further thought did Christ mean to convey, when He said, "I am the Way"? We cannot see the other side of the moon : so the full import of these words, as they touch his wonderful nature, as it lies between Him and his Father, is beyond us; but we may at least study the face they turn towards our lives.

The true value of a way is never realised until we are following it through an unknown country, or groping along it in almost absolute darkness. I remember, during a tour in Switzerland, on starting for a long day's march, the comfort of the assurance that I had to keep to one road which was clearly defined, and it would inevitably bring me to my destination. How different this from another experience of making my way, as I might, across the hill-sides in the direction which I fancied was the right one! All that had to be done in the first instance was to follow the roadway, to obey its sinuous windings, to climb the hills where it climbed, to descend the valleys where it descended, to cross the rivers and torrents at the precise point with it. It seemed responsible for me as long as I kept to it. Whenever I thought to better myself by wandering right or left, I found myself landed in some difficulty, and when I returned to it, it seemed to say, "Why did you leave me? I know that sometimes I am rough and difficult; but I can do better for you than you can for yourself, and indeed I am the only possible way. Obey me, and I will bring you home." It is so that Christ

speaks to us.

Each day, as we leave our home, we know that the prepared path lies before us, in the good works which God has prepared for us to walk in. And when we are ignorant of their direction, and are at a loss as to where to place our steps, we have only to concern ourselves with Christ, and almost unconsciously we shall find ourselves making progress in the destined way. Christ is the Way: love Christ, trust Christ, obey Christ, be concerned with Christ, and all else will be added. Christ is the Way. When the heart is wrapt up in Him, it is on the way, and it is making progress, although it never counts the rate or distance, so occupied is it with Him.

"I fear I make no progress," sighs the timid soul. "But what is Christ to thee?" "Everything."

"Then if He be all in all to thee, thou art most certainly on God's way; and thou art making progress towards thy home, albeit that it is unconsciously. Be of good cheer, Christ is the Way; remember the ancient pilgrims, of whom it is written that the way was in their hearts."

"But God the Father is so little to met"

"But to deal with Christ is to deal with God: to be wrapt up in the love of Christ is to make ever deeper discoveries into the heart of God. He is the Way to God: to know Him is to come to the Father."

II. CHRIST AS THE TRUTH.

The thought grows deeper as we advance. Obedience to the Way conducts to the vision of the Truth; ethics to spiritual optics. The truth-seeker must first submit himself in all humility and obedience to Christ; and when he is willing to do his will, he is permitted to know.

Christ is more than a teacher. "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God," said Nicodemus. He is more, He is the Truth of God. All truth is ensphered in Him. All the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. We fully know truth only as it is in Jesus. When the Spirit of Truth would lead us into all truth, He can do nothing better than take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to us, because to know Christ is to know the truth in its most complete, most convenient, and most accessible form. If you know Christ intimately and fully, even if you know nothing else, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. If you love truth, and are a child of the truth, you will be inevitably attracted to Christ, and recognise the truth that speaks through his glorious nature. "He that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Distinguish between Christ the Truth, and truth about Him. Many true things may be said about Him; but we are not saved by truths about Him, but by Himself, the Truth.

Not the indubitable fact that Jesus died; but the Person of Him who died and lives for evermore.

Not the certain fact that Jesus lay in the grave; but the blessed Man Himself, who lay there for me.

Not the incontestable facts of his resurrection and ascension; but that He has borne my nature to the midst of the Throne, and has achieved a victory which helps me in my daily struggle.

This is the ground basis of all true saving faith. The soul may accept truths about Christ, as it would any well authenticated historical facts; but it is not materially benefited or saved until it has come to rest on the bosom of Him of whom these facts are recorded.

To know Christ as Truth demands truth in heart and life. The insincere man; the trifler; the flippant jester, who takes nothing seriously; the superficial man, who uses the deepest expressions as counters for society talk; the inconsistent man, who is daily doing violence to his convictions by permitting things which his conscience condemns--must stand for ever on the outskirts of the Temple of Truth: they have no right to stand before the King of Truth. If you have never discerned the truth as it is in Jesus, it becomes a serious question whether you are perfectly true, or whether you are not, like Pilate, harbouring insincerity in your heart, which blinds your eyes to His ineffable attributes.

Concern yourself with Christ. Be content to let the world and its wisdom alone. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God... He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Give yourself to know Christ, who is made unto us wisdom, as well as sanctification and redemption. To know Him is to be at the fountain-head of all truth; and the soul which has dwelt with Him by day and night will find itself not only inspired by an undying love for the true, but able to hold fellowship with truth-lovers and truth-seekers everywhere; nay, will be able even to instruct those who have the reputation of great learning and knowledge in the schools of human thought. "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, because I have kept thy precepts." To know and to possess Christ is to have the Word, that is the Wisdom of God, enshrined as a most sacred possession in the heart.

III. CHRIST AS THE LIFE.

It is not enough to know; we need life. Life is, indeed, the gate to knowledge. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee." It was imperative, therefore, that Jesus should become a source of life to men, that they might know the Truth, and be able to walk in the Way; and more especially since death had infected and exhausted all the springs of the world's vitality.

It was into a world of death that the Son of God came. The spring of life in our first parents had become tainted at its source. At the best Adam was only a living soul. Dead--dead--dead in trespasses and sins; such was the Divine verdict, such the course of this world. Earth resembled the valley in the prophet's vision, full of bones, very many and very dry. All the reservoirs of life were spent; its fountains had died away in wastes of sand.

Then the Son of God brought life from the eternal Throne, from God Himself; and became a Life-giving Spirit. His words were spirit and life: He was Himself the Resurrection and the Life: those that believed in Him became partakers of the Divine Nature. The tree of life was again planted in the earth's soil, when Jesus became incarnate. "I give eternal life unto my sheep," He said, "and they shall never perish." "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life."

If, then, you are wanting life, and life more abundantly, you must have Christ. Do not seek it, but Him : not the stream, but the fountain; not the word, but the speaker; not the fruit, but the tree. He is the Life and Light of men.

And if you have Christ, you have life. You may not be competent to define or analyse it; you may not be able to specify the place or time when it first broke into your soul; you may hardly be able to distinguish it from the workings of your own life: but if you have Christ, trust Christ, desire Christ above all, you have the Life. "He that hath the Son hath the Life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the Life." "We know Him that it true, and we are in Him that is true.., this is eternal life." "I," said Jesus, "am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

8 CHRIST REVEALING THE FATHER

"Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." John 14:8-9.

LONGING of the universal heart of man was voiced by Philip, when he broke in, rather abruptly, on our Lord's discourse with the challenge that He should answer all questions, dissipate all doubt, by showing them the Father. Is there a God? How can I be sure that He is? What does He feel towards us? These are questions which men persistently ask, and wait for the reply. And the Master gave the only satisfactory answer that has ever been uttered in the hearing of mankind, when He said in effect, "The knowledge of God must be conveyed, not in words or books, in symbols or types, but in a life. To know Me, to believe in Me, to come into contact with Me, is to know the deepest heart of God. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, 'Show us the Father'?"

I. PHILIP'S INQUIRY.

It bore witness to the possible growth of the human soul. Only three short years before, as we are told in the first chapter of this Gospel, Christ had found him. At that time he was probably much as the young men of his age and standing. Not specially remarkable save for an interest in, and an earnestness about, the advent of the Messiah; his views, however, of His person and work were limited and narrow: he looked for his advent as the time for the re-establishment of the kingdom of David, and deliverance from the Roman yoke. But three years of fellowship with Jesus had made a wonderful difference in this young disciple. The deepest mysteries of life and death and heaven seemed within his reach. He is not now content with beholding the Messiah; he is eager to know the Father, and to stand within the inner circle of his presence-chamber.

The highest watermark ever touched by the great soul of Moses was when he said, amid the sublimities of Sinai, "I beseech Thee, show me thy glory." But in this aspiration Philip stands beside him. There is a close kinship between the mighty lawgiver and the fisherman of Bethsaida. How little there is to choose between, "Show me thy glory," and "Show us the Father." Great and marvellous is the capacity of the soul for growth!

It truly interpreted the need of man.

"It sufficeth us."

From nature, with all her voices that speak of God's power and Godhead; from the page of history, indented with the print of God's footprints; from type and ceremony and temple, though instituted by God Himself; even from the unrivalled beauty of our Saviour's earthly life--these men turned unsatisfied, unfilled, and said, "We are not yet content; but if Thou wouldest show us the Father, we should be."

And would it not suffice us? Would it not be sufficient to give new zest and reality to prayer, if we could realise that it might be as familiar as the talk of home, or like the petitioning of a little child? Would it not suffice to make the most irksome work pleasant, if we could look up and discern the Father's good pleasure and smile of approval? Would it not suffice to rob pain of its sting, if we could detect the Father's hands adjusting the heat of the furnace? Would it not suffice to shed a light across the dark mystery of death, if we felt that the Father was waiting to lead us through the shadows to Himself? How often the cry rises from sad and almost despairing hearts, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

But surely this request was based on a mistake.--Philip wanted a visible theophany, like that which Moses beheld, when the majestic procession swept down the mountain pass; or as the elders saw, when they beheld the paved sapphire work; or after the fashion of the visions vouchsafed to Elijah, Isaiah, or Ezekiel. He wanted to see the Father. But how can you make wisdom, or love, or purity visible, save in a human life?

Yet this is the mistake we are all liable to make. We feel that there must be an experience, a vision, a burst of light, a sensible manifestation, before we can know the Father. We strain after some unique and extraordinary presentation of the Deity, especially in the aspect of Fatherhood, before we can be completely satisfied, and thus we miss the lesson of the present hour. Philip was so absorbed in his quest for the transcendent and sublime, that he missed the revelations of the Father which for three years had been passing under his eyes. God had been manifesting his tenderest and most characteristic attributes by the beauty of the Master's life, but Philip had failed to discern them; till now the Master bids him go back on the photographs of those years, as fixed in his memory, to see in a thousand tiny illustrations how truly the Father dwelt in Him, and lived through his every word and work.

Are you straining after the vision of God, startled by every footstep, intently listening till the very atmosphere shall become audible, expecting an overwhelming spectacle? In all likelihood you will miss all. The kingdom comes not with outward show. When men expected Christ to come by the front door, He stole in at the back. Whilst Philip was waiting for the Father to be shown in thunder and lightning, in startling splendour, in the stately majesty that might become the Highest, he missed the daily unfolding of the Divine Nature that was being afforded in the Life with which he dwelt in daily contact.

Philip's request emphasised the urgent need of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.--"If ye had known Me " the Saviour said. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" They failed to know the Father, because they failed to know Christ; and they failed in this because they knew Him only after the flesh. They were so familiar with Him as their Friend, his love was so natural, tender, and human, He had become so closely identified with all their daily existence, that they did not recognise the fire that shone behind the porcelain, the Deity that tabernacled beneath the frail curtains.

Often those who dwell amid the loveliest or grandest scenery miss the beauty which is unveiled to strangers from a distance. Certain lives have to be withdrawn from us before we understand how fair they were, and how much to us. And Jesus had to leave his disciples before they could properly appreciate Him. The Holy Spirit must needs take of the things of Christ, and reveal them, before his followers could realise their true significance, symmetry, and beauty.

Two things are needful, then: first, we must know Christ through the teaching of the Holy Ghost; and next, we must receive Him into our hearts, that we may know Him, as we know the workings of our own hearts. Each knows himself, and could recognise the mint-mark of his own individuality; so when Christ has become resident within us, and has taken the place of our self-life, we know Him as we know ourselves. "What man knoweth the things of man save the spirit of man which is in him?--but we have the mind of Christ."

II. THE LORD'S REPLY.

"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

He did not rebuke the request, as unfit to proffer, or impossible to satisfy. He took it for granted that such a desire would exist in the heart, and that his disciples would always want to be led by Him into the Father's presence. In this his ministry resembled that of the great forerunner, who led his disciples into the presence of the Bridegroom, content to decrease if only He might increase. The Master's answer was, however, widely different from John's. The forerunner pointed to Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God"; Jesus pointed to Himself, and said, "I and my Father are One; to have seen Me is to have seen the Father; to have Me is to possess the Father."

It troubled the Lord greatly that He had been so long time with them, and yet they had not known Him; that they had not realised the source of his words and works; that they had concentrated their thought on Him, instead of passing, as He meant them to do, from the stream to the source, from the seal to the die, from the beam of the Divine glory to its Sun. He bade them, therefore, from that moment realise that they knew and had seen the Father in knowing and seeing Himself. Not more surely had the Shekinah dwelt in the tabernacle of old, than it indwelt his nature, though too thickly shrouded to be seen by ordinary and casual eyes.

Let us get help from this. Many complain that they know Christ, pray to Christ, are conscious of Christ, but that the Father is far away and impalpable. They are therefore straining after some new vision or experience of God, and undervaluing the religious life to which they have already attained. It is a profound mistake. To have Jesus is to have God; to know Jesus is to know God; to pray to Jesus is to pray to God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. Look up to Him even now from this printed page, and say, "My Lord and my God."

Jesus is not simply an incarnation of God in the sense in which, after the fashion of the Greek mythology, gods might come down in the likeness of men, adopting a disguise which they would afterwards cast aside; Jesus is God. All the gentle attributes of his nature are God's; and all the strong and awful attributes of power, justice, purity, which we are wont to associate with God, are his also.

Happy is the moment when we awake to realise that in Jesus we have God manifest and present; to know this is the revelation of the Father by the Son, of which our Saviour spoke in Matt. 11:27.

III A GLIMPSE INTO THE LORD'S INNER LIFE.

This Gospel is the most lucid and profound treatise in existence on his inner life. It is the revelation of the principles on which our Saviour lived.

So absolutely had He emptied Himself that He never spoke his own words: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself." He never did his own works: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. The Father abiding in Me doeth his works." This was the result of that marvellous self-emptying of which the Apostle speaks. Our Lord speaks as though, in his human nature, He had a choice and will of his own. "Not my will, but thine be done," was his prayer. Perhaps it was to this holy and divine personality that Satan made appeal in the first temptation, bidding Him use his powers for the satisfaction of his hunger, and in independence of his Father's appointment. But however much of this independence was within our Lord's reach, He deliberately laid it aside. Before He spoke, his spirit opened itself to the Father, that He might speak by his lips; before He acted, He stilled the promptings of his own wisdom, and lifted Himself into the presence of the Father, to ascertain what He was doing, and to receive the inflow of his energy (John 5:19; 12:44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49).

These are great mysteries, which will engage our further consideration. In the meanwhile, let us reason that if our Lord was so careful to subordinate Himself to the Father that He might be all in all, it well becomes us to restrain ourselves, to abstain from speaking our own words or doing our own works, that Jesus may pour his energies through our being, and that those searching words may be fulfilled in us also, "Striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily."

9 THE GREAT DEEDS OF FAITH

"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."---John 14:12.

WHENEVER our Lord was about to say something unusually important, He introduced it by the significant expression, "Verily, verily"; or, as it is in the original, "Amen, amen, I say unto you." The words well become his lips, who in the Book of Revelation is called "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness." They are really our Lord's most solemn affirmation of the truth of what He was about to utter, as well as an indication that something of importance was about to be revealed.

Indeed, it was necessary in the present case that the marvellous announcement of the text should receive unusual confirmation, because of its wide extent. If our Lord had ascribed this power of doing greater works than He achieved in his earthly life, to apostle, prophet, or illustrious saint, we should have required no special assurance of its deliberate truth; but to learn that powers so transcendent are within the reach of any ordinary believer, to learn that anyone who believes may outdo the miracles on the outskirts of Nain and at the tomb of Bethany, is as startling as it is comforting. There is no reason why the humblest soul that ponders this page should not become the medium and vehicle through which the Christ of the glory shall not surpass the Christ of Galilee, Jerusalem, and Judea.

The best method of treating these words is to take them clause by clause as they stand.

I. THE FIRST NOTE IS FAITH.

"He that believeth on Me." Three varieties of faith are alluded to in the context. Faith in his works: "Believe the works." Faith in his words: "Believe Me." Faith in Himself, as here. In the Greek the preposition translated in, would be better rendered into, as though the believer was ever approaching the heart of Christ in deeper, warmer, closer fellowship; perpetual motion towards, combined with unbroken rest in. Each of these three forms of faith plays an important part in the Christian life.

Arrested by the works of Christ--his irresistible power over nature, his tender pity for those who sought his aid, the blessed and far-reaching results of his miracles--we cry with Nicodemus, "Verily, this is a Teacher come from God; for none can do such miracles, except God be with Him." The Master perpetually appealed to the witness borne by his works to his Divine mission; as when He said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and my Father." And again, "The very works that I do bear witness of Me." But at the best the works of Christ are only like the great bell ringing in the church-tower calling attention to the life being unfolded within, and are not calculated to induce the faith to which the greater works are possible.

Next we come to the words of Christ. They are spirit and life: they greatly feed the soul. He speaks as none other has ever spoken of the mysteries of life, death, God, and eternity. It is through the words that we come to the Speaker. By feeding on them we are led into vital union with Himself. But his words, as such, and apart from Him, will not produce works that shall surpass those He wrought in his earthly ministry.

Therefore from works and words we come to the Lord Himself with a trust which passes up beyond the lower ranges of faith; which does not simply receive what He waits to give, or reckon upon his faithfulness, but which unites us in indissoluble union with Himself. This is the highest function of faith; it is unitive: it welds us in living union with our Lord, so that we are one with Him, as He is one with God.

We are in Him in the Divine purpose which chose us in Him before the foundation of the world; grafted into Him in his cross; partaking of a common life with Him through the regeneration of the Holy Ghost. But all these become operative in the union wrought by a living faith; so that the strongest assertions which Jesus made of the close relationship between his Father and Himself become the current coin of holy speech, as they precisely describe the union which subsists between us and Jesus. The living Saviour has sent us, and we live by the Saviour. The words we speak are not from ourselves; but the Saviour within us, He doeth his works. We are in Him, and He in us; all ours are his, and his ours.

Stay, reader, and ask thyself whether thou hast this faith which incorporates thee with the Man who died for thee on the cross, and now occupies the Throne--the last Adam who has become a life-giving Spirit.

II. A TRUE FAITH ALWAYS WORKS.

"He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also."

There are many counterfeits of faith in the world. Electroplate! veneer! They will inevitably fail in the supreme test, if not before. The Apostle James especially calls attention to the distinction between a living and a dead faith. It becomes us to be on our guard.

The test of genuine faith are twofold. In the first place, a genuine, living faith has Christ for its object. The hand may tremble, but it touches his garment's hem; the eye may be dimmed by doubt, but it is directed towards his face; the feet may stumble, but as the fainting pilgrim staggers onward this is his repeated cry, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

In the second place, a true faith works. Its works approve its nature, and show that it has reached the heart of Christ, and has become the channel through which his life-forces pour into the soul. Jacob knew that Joseph was alive and that his sons had opened communications with him, because of the waggons that he sent; and we may know that Jesus lives beyond the mist of time, and that our faith has genuinely connected us with Him, because we feel the pulse of his glorious nature within our own. And when this is so, we cannot but work out what He is working within.

Do you ask me why a true faith must work? Ask why the branch can do no other than bear clusters of ruddy grapes; its difficulty would be to abstain from bearing; the vitality of the root accounts for its life and productiveness. Blame the lark, whose nature vibrates in the sunshine, for pouring from its small throat volumes of sound; Name the child, full of bounding health, for laughing, singing, and leaping; blame the musician, whose soul has caught some fragments of the music of eternity, for pouring it forth in song--before you wonder why it is that the true faith which has opened the way from the believer to his Lord produces those greater works.

III. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF WORK INDICATED.

(1) "The works that I do shall he do also."

What a blessing Christ's ministry must have been to thousands of sufferers! He passed through Galilee as a river of water of life. In front of Him were deserts of fever blasted by the sirocco, and malarious swamps of ague and palsy, and the mirage of the sufferer's deferred hope; but after He had passed, the parched ground became a pool and the thirsty land springs of water, the eyes of the blind were opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame man leapt as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sang.

How glad the sick of any district must have been when it was rumoured that He was on his way to it! What eager consultations

must have been held as to the best means of conveying them into his presence! What sleepless nights must have been spent in speculation as to whether, and how, He would heal!

Such results followed the labours of the apostles. The lame man at the beautiful gate of the Temple; the palsied Aeneas; the dead Dorcas; the crowds in the streets overshadowed by Peter's passing figure; the miracles wrought by Paul at Paphos, Lystra, Philippi, and Malta--all attested the truth of the Master's words, "The works that I do shall he do also." There is no doubt that, if it were necessary, such miracles might be repeated, if only the Church exercised the same faith as in those early days of her ministry to the world. But there are greater works than these.

(2) "Greater works than these shall he do."

The soul is greater than the body, as the jewel than the casket. All work, therefore, which produces as great an effect on the soul-life as miracles, on the physical life, must be proportionately greater, as the tenant is greater than the house, as the immortal than the mortal. It is a greater work to give sight to the blind soul than to the blind body; to raise the soul from its grave than Lazarus from his four days' sleep.

Again, eternity is also greater than time, as the ocean is greater than a creek. The ills from which the miracles of Christ delivered the suppliant crowds were at the most limited by years. The flesh of the leper became wrinkled with old age; Jairus' daughter fell again on sleep; the generation which had been benefited by the mighty works passed away without handing on a legacy of health to succeeding time! But if a sinner is turned from the error of his ways, if salvation comes to a nature destined for immortality, and lifts it from the slough of sin to the light of God, the results must be greater because more permanent and far-reaching.

Moreover, the pain from which the word of the Gospel may save is infinitely greater than that which disease could inflict. Men have been known to brave any physical torture rather than endure the insupportable anguish of a sin-laden conscience. The worm that never dies is more tolerable than cancer; the fire that is never quenched keener than that of fever. To save a soul from these is, therefore, a greater work.

Christ hinted at this distinction in one of his earliest miracles, when He proposed to forgive the sick of the palsy his sins, before bidding him walk; and bade the seventy rejoice more that their names were written in heaven than that the devils were subject to them. The apostles bear witness to a growing appreciation of this distinction, by the small space given in the Acts of the Apostles to their miracles, compared with the greater attention concentrated on their discourses; and surely the history of Christendom bears witness to the great and permanent character of spiritual work. The Church could not have influenced the world as she has done, had she been nothing more than a healer of diseases and an exorciser of demons.

IV. THE SOURCE OF THESE GREATER WORKS.

"Because I go to the Father."

Clearly the Church has had an argument to present to men which even her Master could not use. He could not point, except indefinitely, to the cross, its flowing blood, its testimony to a love which the cold waters of death could not stanch. Through the ages this has been the master-motive, the supreme argument.

Then, again, the Master could not count as we can upon the co-operation of the Spirit in his convicting power. "When He is come, He will convict the world of sin"; but He did not come till after that brief career of public ministry had closed. Speaking reverently, we may say that the Church has an Ally that even her Master had not.

But the main reason is yet to come. Perhaps an illustration will best explain it. Supposing the great painter, Raphael, were to infuse his transcendent power, as he possessed it during his mortal life, into some young brain, there is no reason why the genius of the immortal painter should not effect, through a mere tyro in art, results in form and colour as marvellous as those which he bequeathed to coming time. But suppose, further, that after having been three hundred years amid the tones, forms, and colours of the heavenly world, he could return, and express his thoughts and conceptions through some human medium, would not these later productions be greater works than those which men cherish as a priceless legacy? So if the Lord were to work in us such works only as He did before He ascended to his glory, they would be inferior to those which He can produce, now that He has entered into his glorified state, and has reassumed the power of which He emptied Himself when He stooped to become incarnate. This is what He meant when He said, "Because I go into the Father."

Open your hearts to the living, risen, glorified Saviour. Let Him live freely in your life, and work unhindered through your faith; expect Him to pour through you as a channel some of those greater works which must characterize the closing years of the present age. Remember how the discourses and miracles of his earthly life ever increased in importance and meaning; for such must be the law of his ministry in the heavenlies. According to our faith it will be unto us. The results which we see around us are no measure of what Christ would or could do; they indicate the straitening effect of our unbelief. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be

ye lifted up, ye low-browed doors of unbelief; and the King of Glory shall come in with his bright and mighty retinue, and shall go out through human lives to do greater works by the instrumentality of his people than ever He wrought in the course of his earthly ministry.

10 HOW TO SECURE MORE AND BETTER PRAYER

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."--John 14:16.

THE GREAT lack of our life is that we do not pray more. And there is no failure so disastrous or criminal as this. It is very difficult to account for it. If in all times of discouragement and vicissitude we could have access to one of the wisest and noblest of our fellow-creatures, or to some venerated departed saint, or to the guardian angel deputed to attend our steps, or to the archangel that presides as viceregent over this system of worlds, how strong and brave we should become! Whatever our need, we would at once seek his august presence, and obtain his counsel and assistance. How extraordinary is our behaviour then with respect to prayer, and that we make so little of our opportunities of access into the presence of our Father, in whom wisdom, power, and love blend perfectly, and who is always willing to hear us--nay, is perpetually urging us to come!

The reason may lie in the very commonness of our opportunities. The swing-door of prayer stands always waiting for the least touch of faith to press it back. If our Father's presence-chamber were opened to us only once a year, with how much greater reverence would we enter it, how much more store would we set on it! We should anticipate for the whole year the honour and privilege of that interview, and eagerly avail ourselves of it. Alas, that familiarity with prayer does not always increase our appreciation of its magnificence!

The cause of our apathy is probably also to be sought in the effort which is required to bring our sensuous and earth-bound natures into true union with the Spirit of God. True prayer is labour. Epaphras laboured in his intercessions. Our feet shrink from the steep pathway that climbs those heights; our lungs do not readily accustom themselves to the rare air that breathes around the summit of the Mount of Communion.

But there is a deeper reason yet : we have not fully learnt or obeyed the laws and conditions of prayer. Until they are apprehended and complied with, it is not possible for us to pray as we might. They are not, however, very recondite. The least advanced in the Divine school may read them on this page, where Christ unbares the deepest philosophy of devotion in the simplest phrases.

It is evident that He expected that the age which Pentecost was to inaugurate, and to which He so frequently refers as "in that day," would in a special sense be the age of prayer. Mark how frequently in this last discourse He refers to it (John 14:13-14, 15:7-16; 16:24-26). Clearly the infilling of the Holy Spirit has a special bearing on the prayerfulness of the individual and the Church. But this will unfold as we proceed.

I. THE PRAYING CHRIST.

"I will pray the Father." It is true that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, because He had completed the work for which He became man. That session indicated a finished atonement. As the Father rested from the work of creation, so the Son entered into his rest, having ceased from the work of redemption, so far as it could be effected in his death, resurrection, and ascension. But as the Father in his rest worked in providence, sustaining that which He had created, so did the Saviour continue to work after He had entered into his Sabbath-keeping.

We have already dealt with one branch of his twofold activity, in his work through those who believe. The greater works which the risen Saviour has been, and is, achieving through his people bear witness to the perpetual energy streaming from his life in the azure depths. "The apostles," Mark tells us, "went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming their word with signs following."

The other branch of his twofold ministry is his intercession on our behalf. He says, "I will pray the Father" for you.

(1) What a contrast to the assertions which we have already pondered of his oneness with the Father, and to his assurance in almost the same breath that He would Himself answer his people's prayers! It is inexplicable, save on the hypothesis that He has a dual nature, by virtue of which, on the one hand, He is God, who answers prayer, and on the other the Son of Man, who pleads as the Head and Representative of a redeemed race.

(2) It is, however, in harmony with Old Testament symbolism. The High Priest often entered the presence of God with the names of the people on his breast, the seat of love, and on his shoulder, the seat of power; and once a year, with a bowl of blood and sprig of thyme in his hands, pleaded for the entire nation. What more vivid portrayal could there be of the ceaseless intercession of that

High Priest who was once manifested to bear the sin of many, and who now appears in the presence of God for us!

(3) In the days of his flesh, He pleaded for his Church, as in the sublime intercessory prayer of John 17; for individuals, as when He said, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee"; and for the world, as when He first assumed his High-priestly functions, saying from his cross, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." Thus He pleads still. For Zion's sake He does not hold his peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. For his Church, for individual believers, for thee and me, He says in heaven, as on earth, "Father, I pray for them." Perennially from his lips pours out a stream of tender supplication and entreaty. This is the river that makes glad the city of God. Anticipating coming trial; interposing when the cobra-coil is beginning to encircle us; pitying us when the sky is overcast and lowering; not tiring or ceasing, though we are heedless and unthankful--He pleads on the mountain brow through the dark hours, whilst we sleep.

(4) These intercessions are further stimulated by our love and obedience. "If ye love Me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father." He looks on us; and where love is yearning to love more fully, and obedience falters in its high endeavours, He prays yet more eagerly that grace may be given us to be what we long to be. He prays for those who do not pray for themselves; but He is even more intent on the perfecting of those who, because of their loyalty and love, are the objects of his special interest--"I pray for them; I pray not for the world."

(5) His special petition is that we may receive the gift of Pentecost. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." It would almost seem as though He spent the mysterious ten days between his ascension and Pentecost in special intercession that his Church might be endued with power from on high. The pleading Church on earth and the pleading Saviour in heaven were at one. The two voices agreed in perfect symphony, and Pentecost was the Father's answer. The Saviour prayed to the Father, and He gave another Comforter. Nor has He ceased in this sublime quest. It is not improbable that every revival of religion, every fresh and deeper baptism of the Spirit, every new infilling of individual souls, has been due to our Saviour's strong cryings on our behalf. It may be that at this hour He is engaged in asking the Father that He would dower the universal Church with another Pentecost; and if so, let us join Him in the prayer.

II. THE PRAYING CHURCH.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name."

(1) Prayer must be addressed to the Father.

As soon as we utter that sacred name, the Divine nature responds; and, to put it vividly, is on the alert to hear what we desire. A little child cannot utter a sigh however slight, a sob however smothered, without awakening the quick attention of its mother; and at the first whisper of our Father's name, He is at hand to hear and bless. Alas! we have too often grieved his Holy Spirit by a string of selfish petitions, or a number of formal platitudes. To the wonderment of angels, we thus fritter away the most precious and sacred opportunities. Be still, then, before you pray, to consider what to ask; order your prayers for presentation: and be sure to begin the blessed interview with words of sincere and loving appreciation and devotion.

(2) The conditions of successful prayer are clearly defined in these words.

There must be love to Christ and to all men; obedience to his will, so far as it is revealed; recognition of his mediation and intercession, as alone giving us the right to draw nigh; identification with Him, so as to be able to use his name; passionate desires for the Father's glory. Where these five conditions exist, there can be no doubt as to our receiving the petitions which we offer. Prayer that complies with these conditions cannot fail, since it is only the return tide of an impulse which has emanated from the heart of God.

(3) Note how the Saviour lives for the promotion of his Father's glory.

How often, during his earthly ministry, He declared that He was desiring and seeking this beyond all else! Though his prayer could only be granted by his falling into the ground to die, He never flinched from saying, "Father, glorify thy Name." But here He tells us that through the ages as they pass He will still be set on the same quest. By all means He must glorify his Father; and if, in any prayer of ours, we can show that what we ask will augment the Father's glory, we are certain to obtain his concurrence and glad acquiescence. "That," He says, "will I do."

(4) We must pray "in his Name." As the ambassador speaks in the name of queen and country; as the tax-collector appeals in the name of the authorities; both deriving from their identification with their superiors an authority they could not otherwise exercise--so our words become weighted with a great importance when we can say to our Father, "We are so one with Jesus that He is asking in and through us; these words are his; these desires his; these objects those on which his heart is set. We have his sanction and authority to use his name." When we ask a favour in the name of another, that other is the petitioner, through us; so when we approach God in the Name of Jesus, it is not enough to append his sacred name as a formula, but we must see to it that Jesus is

pleading in us, asking through our lips, as He is asking through his own in the heart of the sapphire Throne.

III. THE LINK BETWEEN THESE TWO.

"He shall give you another Comforter."

The word "Comforter" might be rendered "Advocate." We have two Advocates: one with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, the other with us. As the one ascended, the other descended. As the one sat down at the right hand of God, the other rested on the heads and hearts of the company in the upper room. As the one has compassion on our infirmities, so the other helps our infirmities. As the one ever liveth to intercede for us in heaven, so the other maketh intercession in us for the saints with groanings that cannot be uttered. This is the clue to the mystery of prayer. It is all-important that the Church on earth should be in accord with its Head in his petitions before the Throne. Of what avail is it for a client and advocate to enter an earthly court of justice unless they are in agreement? Of what use is it to have two instruments in an orchestra which are not perfectly in tune? And how can we expect that God will hear us unless we ask what is according to his will, and, therefore, what is in the heart and thought of Jesus?

This, then, is the problem that confronts us. How can we ascertain what Jesus is pleading for? We may guess it generally, but how be assured of it particularly? Who will tell us the direction in which the current of his mighty pleadings is setting, that we may take the same direction? These inquiries are answered in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand, He fills and moves the Head, and on the other, his members. There is one Spirit of life between Jesus in the glory and his believing people everywhere. One ocean washes the shores of all natures in which the life of God is found.

Be still, therefore, and listen carefully to the voice of the Spirit of God speaking in thine heart, as thou turnest from all other sounds towards his still small whisper, and He will tell thee all. Coming, as He does, from the heart of Jesus, He will tell thee his latest thought. In Him we have the mind of Christ. Then, sure that we are one with Him, and therefore with the Father, we shall ask what is according to his will to give. Prayer goes in an eternal circle. It begins in the heart of God, comes to us through the Saviour and by the Spirit, and returns through us again to its source. It is the teaching of the rain-drops, of the tides, of the procession of the year; but wrought out and exemplified in the practice of holy hearts.

11 THE OTHER PARACLETE

"He shall give you another Comforter."--John 14:16.

THERE was no doubt in our Lord's mind that his asking would be at once followed by the Father's giving. Indeed, the two actions seemed, in his judgment, indissolubly connected--"I will ask, and He shall give." From which we learn that prayer is a necessary link in the order of the Divine government. Though we are assured that what we ask is in God's purpose to communicate--that it lies in the heart of a promise, or in the line of the Divine procedure--yet we must nevertheless make request. "Ye have not," said the Apostle James, "because ye ask not." "Ask," said the Master, his eye being open to the laws of the spiritual world, "and it shall be given you."

The prayer of the Head of the Church was heard, and He received the Holy Spirit to bestow Him again. "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit," said the Apostle Peter, "He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Thus the Holy Spirit is the gift of the Father, through the Son; though He is equal with each of the blessed Persons in the Trinity, and is with them to be worshipped and glorified.

I. THE PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

That word, "another" --"He shall give you another Comforter"--is in itself sufficient to prove the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Ghost. If a man promises to send another as his substitute, we naturally expect to see a man like unto himself, occupying his place, and doing his work. And when Jesus foreannounced another Comforter, He must have intended a Person as distinct and helpful as He had been. A breath, an afflatus, an impersonal influence, could not have stood in the same category with Himself.

There are those who think that the Holy Spirit is to the Lord Jesus what a man's spirit is to his body; and imagine that our Lord simply intended that the spirit of his life-teaching and self-sacrifice would brood over and inspire his followers; but this could not have fulfilled the promise of "the other Comforter." It would simply have been Himself over again--though no longer as a living Person; rather as the momentum and energy of a receding force which gets weaker and ever weaker as the ages pass. Thus the spirit of Napoleon or of Caesar is becoming little more than a dim faint echo of footsteps that once shook the world.

Jesus knew how real and helpful He had been to his followers--the centre around which they had rallied; their Teacher, Brother, Master; and He would not have tantalised them by promising another Paraclete, unless He had intended to announce the advent of One who would adjust Himself to their needs with that quickness of perception, and sufficiency of resource, which characterize a personal Leader and Administrator. There were times approaching when the little band would need counsel, direction, sympathy,

the interposition of a strong wise Hand--qualities which could not be furnished by the remembrance of the past, fading like the colours on clouds when the sun has set; but which could only be secured by the presence of a strong, wise, ever-present Personality. "I have been one Paraclete," said the Lord in effect; "but I am now going to plead your cause with the Father, that another Paraclete may take my place, to be my other self, and to abide with you for ever."

There is no adequate translation for the word Paraclete. It may be rendered Comforter, Helper, Advocate, Interpreter; but no one word suffices. The Greek simply means one whom you call to your side, in a battle, or a law-court, to assist you by word or act. Such a One is Christ; such a One is the Holy Spirit. He is a definite Person whom you can call to, and lean on, and work with. If a man were drowning, he would not call to the wandering breath of the wind; but to any person who might be on the bank. The Spirit is One whom you can summon to your side; and it is therefore quite in keeping with Scripture to pray to the Holy Spirit. On the whole we are taught to direct prayer to the Father, through the Son, and as prompted by the Holy Spirit; but as a matter of practice and habit, it is indifferent which Person in the Holy Trinity we address, for each is equally God. As the Father is God, so also is the Son, and so the Holy Spirit. In her hymns and liturgies the Church has never hesitated to summon the Holy Spirit to her help.

It is in recognition of the Personality of the Holy Spirit that the historian of the Acts of the Apostles quotes his solemn words, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul"; tells us that Ananias and Sapphira lied to Him; and records that the Church at Jerusalem commenced its encyclical letter with the words, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Happy that body of Christians which has come to realize that the Holy Ghost is as certainly, literally, and personally present in its midst, as Jesus Christ was present when in the days of his flesh He tarried among men!

II. A SEVENFOLD PARALLEL BETWEEN THE ADVENTS OF THE TWO PARACLETES.

(1) Each was in the world before his specific advent.

Long before his Incarnation the delights of the Son of God were with men. In Angel-form, He visited their tents, spoke with them face to face, calmed their fears, and fought on their behalf. He trod the holy fields of Palestine with noiseless footfall that left no impress on the tightest sands, long before He learned to walk with baby-feet, or bore his cross up Calvary.

So with the Holy Spirit. He brooded over chaos, strove with men before the Deluge, moved holy men to write the Scriptures, foreshadowed the advent of the Messiah, equipped prophets and kings for their special mission. In restraining evil, urging to good, preparing the way for Christ, the Holy Spirit found abundant scope for his energies. But his influence was rather external than internal; savoured rather of gift than grace; and dealt more often with the few than with the many--with the great souls that reared themselves to heaven like Alpine summits touched with the fires of dawn, rather than with the generality of men, who dwelt in the valley of daily commonplace, enwrap in the mists of ignorance and unbelief. It was to be the special prerogative of this age, that He should be poured out on all flesh, so that sons and daughters should prophesy, whilst servants and handmaidens participated in his gracious influences.

(2) The advent of each was previously announced.

From the Fall, the coming of the great Deliverer was foretold in type and sign, in speech and act, in history and prophecy. Indeed, as the time of the Incarnation drew nigh, as Milton tells us in his sublime ode on the Incarnation, surrounding nations had caught from the chosen people the spirit of expectancy, and the world was in feverish anticipation of the coming of its Redeemer. He was the Desire of all nations. All the ages, and all the family of man, accompanied Mary to Bethlehem, and worshipped with the Magi.

So with the Holy Spirit. Joel distinctly foretold that in the last days of that dispensation, God would pour out his Spirit--and his message is echoed by Isaiah, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and others--till Jesus came, who more specifically and circumstantially led the thoughts of his disciples forward to the new age then dawning, which should be introduced and signalled by the coming and ministry of the Spirit.

(3) Each was manifested in a body.

The Lord Jesus in that which was prepared for Him by the Father, and born of a pure Virgin. We are told that He took on Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. Similarly, the Holy Spirit became, so to speak, incorporate in that mystical Body, the Church, of which Jesus is the Head.

On the day of Pentecost, the hundred and twenty who were gathered in the upper room, and who, up to that time, had had no corporate existence, were suddenly constituted a Church, the habitation and home of the Divine Spirit. What the human body of Jesus was to the second Person of the Holy Trinity, that the infant Church was to the third; though it did not represent the whole body, since we must add to those gathered in the upper room many more in heaven and on earth, who by virtue of their union with the risen Christ constituted with them the Holy Catholic Church, which is his body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all. "This," said the blessed Spirit, "is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it."

(4) Each was named before his advent.

"Thou shalt call his name Emmanuel." "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Thus was the Lord Jesus designated to loving hearts before his birth.

So also with the Holy Spirit. The last discourses of Jesus are full of appellatives, each setting forth some new phase of the Holy Spirit's ministry; some freshly-cut facet of his character. The Spirit of Truth; the Holy Spirit; the Paraclete; the Spirit of Conviction--such are some of the names by which He was to be known.

(5) Each was dependent on another.

Our Lord said distinctly, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do"; and He said of the Holy Spirit, using the same preposition, "He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak."

What a conception is here! It is as though the Holy Spirit were ever listening to the Divine colloquy and communion between the Father and the Son, and communicating to receptive hearts disclosures of the secrets of the Deity. The things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, God hath revealed unto us by his Spirit; "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

(6) Each received witness.

The Father bore witness to his Son on three separate occasions. On the first, at his baptism, He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; on the second, when the three apostles were with Him on the holy mount, and He received from the Father glory and honour; and on the third, when the inquiry of the Greeks reminded Him of his approaching death, and the voice from heaven assured Him that glory would accrue to the Father through his falling into the ground to die.

So in regard to the Holy Spirit. Seven times from the Throne the ascended Lord summons those that have ears to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches; as though to emphasise the urgent importance of his message, and the necessity of giving it our most earnest heed, lest we should drift past it.

(7) The presence of each is guaranteed during the present age.

"I am with you," said the Lord, and they were among the closing words of his posthumous ministry, "all the days, even unto the end of the age"; and here it is foretold that the Comforter would abide during the age, for so the phrase might more accurately be rendered.

This is specially the age of the Holy Spirit. He may be grieved, ignored, and rejected; but He will not cease his blessed ministry to the bride, till the Bridegroom comes to claim her for Himself. Oh, let us avail ourselves of his gracious presence to the utmost of our opportunity, that He may realise in us the full purpose of his ministry. Let us not pray for Him, as if in any degree He had been withdrawn, but as believing that He is as much with the Church of to-day as on the day of Pentecost; as near us as when awestruck eyes beheld Him settling in flame on each meekly-bowed head.

The Lord said, "He shall remain with you to the end of the age." The age is not closed, therefore He must be with us here and now. There can be no waning of his grace or power. The pot of oil is in the Church, only she has ceased to bring her empty vessels. The mine is beneath our feet, but we do not work it as of yore. The electric current is vibrating around, but we have lost the art of switching ourselves on to its flow. It is not necessary then for us to pray the Father that He should give the Holy Paraclete in the sense in which He bestowed Him on the day of Pentecost in answer to the request of our Lord. That prayer has been answered: the Paraclete is here; but we need to have the eyes of our heart opened to perceive, and the hand of our faith strengthened that we may receive, Him.

The work of the Holy Spirit in and through us is conditioned by certain great laws, which call for our definite and accurate obedience. Not on emotion, nor on hysteric appeals, nor on excitement, but on obedience, does the power of God's Spirit pass into human hearts and lives. Therefore, let us walk in the Paracletism of the Paraclete, continually in the current of his gracious influences, which will bear us on their bosom ever nearer to our Lord. Oh to glorify Him; to know and love Him; to become passionately eager that all hearts should enthrone Him regardless of the personal cost it may involve!

12 THE THREE DISPENSATIONS

"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 14:17.

THEY ARE lofty themes which we have been discussing in the foregoing pages; and just because they touch the highest matters

of the spiritual life, they involve us in profound responsibility. It was because Capernaum had been exalted to heaven in privilege, that she should be cast down to hell. Of those to whom much is given, much is required. Better not to have known these truths of the inner life, if we are content to know them only by an intellectual apprehension, and make no effort to incorporate them into the texture of our character. Few things harden more certainly than to delight in the presentation of the mysteries of the kingdom, without becoming a child of the kingdom.

The object therefore which now engages us is less one of elucidation than of self-examination. Let us discern ourselves. Let us see whether we be in the faith. Let us expose soul and spirit to the discrimination of the Word of God, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I. THERE ARE TWO AVENUES OF KNOWLEDGE:

Perception and Reception.--"Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." Three things are specified as beyond the range of the world's power: it does not receive, it does not know, it does not see, the things of the unseen and eternal world. It cannot see them, therefore it does not know them, and therefore does not receive them; and this is especially true of its attitude towards the Holy Ghost.

When the world hears of the Holy Spirit, it brings to bear upon Him those organs of cognition which it has been accustomed to apply to the objects of the natural world, and even to the human life of Christ. But, as might have been expected, these are altogether useless. It is as absurd to endeavour to detect the presence of the spiritual and eternal by the faculties with which we discern what is seen and temporal, as it would be to attempt to receive the impression of a noble painting by the sense of taste, or to deal with the problems of astronomy by the tests that are employed in chemical analysis. The world, however, does not realise its mistake. It persists in applying tests to the Spirit of God which may be well enough in other regions of discovery, but which are worse than useless here. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "Whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."

There was a touch of this worldly spirit even in Thomas, when he said, "Except I see in his hand the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe"; and in so far as the world-spirit is permitted to hold sway within us, our powers of spiritual perception will be blunted, and become infected with the tendency to make our intellect or imagination our sole means of apprehending divine truth.

There is a better way than this; and our Lord indicates it when He says, "Ye know Him, for He abideth with you, and shall be in you." Pascal said, "The world knows in order to love: the Christian loves in order to know." The same thought underlies these words of Christ. The world attempts to see the Spirit, that it may know and receive Him; the child of God receives Him by an act of faith, that he may know Him.

An illustration of this habit is given in the story of Naaman. The spirit of the world whispered to him of the desirability of knowing that the waters of Israel possessed curative properties, before he committed himself absolutely to the prophet's directions; and if he had waited to know before bathing, he would have remained a helpless leper to the end of his days. His servants, however, had a clearer perception of the way of faith, and persuaded him to dip seven times in the Jordan. He acted on the suggestion, dipped seven times, and his flesh became as that of a little child. Similarly we are called to act upon grounds which the world would hold to be inadequate. We hear the testimony of another; we recognise a suitability in the promises of the Scripture to meet the deep yearnings of our soul; we feel that the words and works of Jesus Christ constitute a unique claim for Him, and we open our hearts towards Him. In absolute humility and perfect obedience we yield to Him our whole nature. Though the night be yet dark, we fling wide our windows to the warm south-west wind coming over the sea. The result is that we begin to know, with an intuitive knowledge that cannot be shaken by the pronouncements of the higher criticism. We have received the Spirit, and our after-life is too short to unfold all that is involved in that unspeakable gift. We know Him because He abideth with us, and is in us. No man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him; and we can only know the Spirit of God when He has taken up his residence within us, and witnesses with our spirit, as One who is interwoven with the very texture of the inner life.

Consecration is therefore the key to this higher knowledge; and if any who read this page are yearning after a discernment of the things of God on which they may build the house of their faith amid the swirl of the storm and the beat of the wave of modern doubt, let them open their entire nature, humbly to receive and diligently to obey that Spirit whom Christ waits to give to all who seek.

II. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS DISPENSATION.

"He shall be in you."

It has been repeatedly said that creation is the work of the Father; redemption, of the Son; and regeneration, of the Holy Spirit. It may also be said that there are three dispensations: that of the Father, in the earlier history of mankind; that of the Son, culminating

in our Lord's ascension; and that of the Holy Spirit, in which we are now living. In the history of the world these were successive; in the history of souls they may be contemporaneous. In the same house one member may be in the dispensation of the Father, another in that of the Son, and a third in that of the Holy Spirit. It is highly necessary, says the saintly Fletcher, that every good steward of the mysteries of God should be well acquainted with this fact, otherwise he will not rightly divide the word of life. There is peril lest we should give the truth of one order of dispensation to those who are living on another level of experience.

There is a remarkable illustration of this in the life of John the Baptist, who clearly realised the distinction on which we are dwelling, and used it with remarkable nicety when approached by various classes of character. When Gentile soldiers came to him, in Roman regimentals, he merely bade them do violence to no man, and be content with their wages. When Jews came, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" To his eagle eye a further dispensation was unveiled to which he alluded when he said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Similarly they to whom inquirers address themselves should diagnose their spiritual standing, that they may lovingly and wisely administer the truth suitable to their condition.

The dispensation of the Father includes those who hope that He has accepted and forgiven them, but have no clear perception of the atoning work of Christ; who are governed rather by fear than love; who tremble beneath the thunders of Sinai more often than they rejoice at the spectacle of Calvary; who are tossed to and fro between hope and despair; who desire the favour of God, but hesitate to speak confidently of having attained it. Such are to be found in churches where the Gospel is veiled beneath heavy curtains of misconception and formalism. In the same class we might put men, like Cornelius, who in every nation fear God and work righteousness.

The dispensation of the Son includes those who clearly perceive his divine nature, and rejoice in his finished propitiation; they know that they are accepted in the Beloved; they receive his teachings about the Father; they submit to the rule of life which He has laid down; but they know comparatively little of the inner life, or of their oneness with Christ in resurrection and ascension; they understand little of what the apostle meant by speaking of Christ being formed in the soul; and, like the disciples at Ephesus, they know but little of the mission and infilling of the Holy Spirit.

The dispensation of the Holy Spirit includes those who have claimed their share in Pentecost. In their hearts the Paraclete dwells in sanctifying grace, on their heads He rests in mighty anointing. Those of the dispensation of the Son resemble Ruth the gleaner; those of the dispensation of the Spirit, Ruth the bride. Those dwell in Romans vii. and Hebrews 3.; these in Romans 8. and Hebrews 4. For those the water has to be drawn from the well; in these it springs up to everlasting life. Oh to know the "in-ness" of the Holy Spirit. Know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you by the Spirit--unless ye be reprobate!

III. THE TOKENS OF THE INDWELLING.

We must distinguish here, as Dr. Steele suggests, between what are variable, and what are constant.

These vary,

(1) The joy of realization, which is sometimes overpowering in its intensity, at other times like the ebbing tide.

(2) Agony for souls, which would be insupportable if it were permanent. Christ only asks us to watch in Gethsemane for one hour.

(3) Access in prayer. Sometimes the vision is face to face; at others, though we grasp as in Jacob's night-wrestle, we cannot behold. Like Esther, we seem to wait in the ante-chamber. As the lark of which Jeremy Taylor speaks, we rise against the east wind.

(4) The openings of Scripture. The Bible does not seem to be always equally interesting. At times it is like the scented letter paper, smelling of aloes and cassia, bearing the handwriting we love; at others it resembles the reading book of the blind man, the characters in which, by constant use, have become almost obliterated, so as hardly to awake answering thought.

(5) The pressure of temptation. We sometimes think that we are getting out of the zone of temptation. The pressure is so reduced that we think we shall never suffer again as we have done. Then, all suddenly, it bursts upon us--as the fury of the storm, when, after an hour's cessation, it takes the mariner unawares.

All these symptoms are too variable to be relied upon for a diagnosis of our spiritual condition, or an evidence of the dispensation to which we belong.

These are constant.

(1) The consciousness of being God's. This is to be distinguished from the outgoing of our faith and love towards God. At the beginning of our experience we hold Him; but as the Holy Spirit dwells more fully we realise that we are held by Him. It is not our love to God, but his love to us; not our faith, but his faithfulness; not the sheep keeping near the Shepherd, but the Shepherd

keeping the sheep near to Himself. A happy sense steals over the heart, as over the spouse--"I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me."

(2) The supremacy of Jesus in the heart. There is no longer a double empire of self and Christ--as in the poor Indian who said to the missionary, "I am two Indians, good and bad"; but there is the undivided reign of Christ, who has put down all rule and authority and power--as in the case of Martin Luther, who said, "If any one should ask of my heart, Who dwells here? I should reply, Not Martin Luther, but Christ."

(3) Peace, which looks out upon the future without alarm because so sure that Christ will do his very best in every day that lies hidden beneath the haze of the future; which forbears to press its will too vehemently, or proffer its request too eagerly, because absolutely certain that Jesus will secure the highest happiness possible, consistently with his glory and our usefulness to men.

(4) Love. When the Spirit of God really dwells within, there is a baptism of love which evinces itself not only in the household and to those naturally lovable, but goes out to all the world, and embraces in its tenderness such as have no natural traits of beauty. Thus the soft waters of the Southern Ocean lap against unsightly rocks and stretches of bare shingle.

Where love reigns in the inner chamber of the soul, doors do not slam; bells are not jerked violently; soft tones modulate the speech; gentle steps tread the highways of the world, bent on the beautiful work of the messengers of peace; and the very atmosphere of the life is warm and sunny as an aureole. There is no doubt of the indwelling Spirit where there is this out-going love.

(5) Deliverance from the love and power of sin, so that it becomes growingly distasteful, and the soul turns with loathing from the carrion on which it once fed contentedly. This begets a sense of purity, robed in which the soul claims kinship to the white-robed saints of the presence-chamber, and reaches out towards the blessedness of the pure in heart who see God. There is still a positive rain of smut and filth in the world around; there is a recognition of the evil tendencies of the self-life, which will assert themselves unless graciously restrained; but triumphing above all is the purity of the indwelling Lord, who Himself becomes in us the quality for which holy souls eagerly long.