

THE NEW LIGHT
ON THE
OLD TRUTH

CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE



**THE NEW LIGHT ON
THE OLD TRUTH**



BY

CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

Reproduced in electronic form

1998

Bank of Wisdom

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Louisville, KY 40201

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TO
FREDERICK STARKWEATHER CHASE
WHO
MAINTAINING AMID HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES
HIS INTEREST IN THINGS SPIRITUAL
OPENED HIS LIBRARY FOR THESE TALKS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

A COMPANY of thirty men met recently in the library of one of their number on six consecutive Monday evenings and invited me to address them on the modifications of religious faith resulting from the investigations of scientists and the researches of critics. They were men of affairs, most of them manufacturers, all of them prominent in business or professional life. For an hour I talked on the great themes of the spirit; then for an hour, often for an hour and a half, there were questions and discussion.

The city in which these discourses were given is one of the busiest and most prosperous in New England. That men of large responsibilities volunteered to give an evening a week to consider religious topics is an indication of a deeper note in our American life.

The addresses were delivered extemporaneously and have been written out from memory, with only slight modifications and additions.

The address on the Bible was somewhat longer than the others, and, being written out more fully, has been divided into two chapters. The specialist will find nothing new in these pages. I cannot boast that any original light has shone upon the old truths through me. The words are the utterance of a preacher who hopes that within the range of his vision he has seen clearly.

I wish to acknowledge indebtedness to Professor Douglas C. Macintosh and Rev. Wilbert L. Anderson, D.D., for helpful suggestions.

CHARLES ALLEN DINSMORE.

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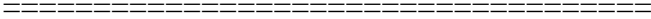
THE MODERN WORLD AND THE
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THE NEW LIGHT ON THE OLD TRUTH

I

THE MODERN WORLD AND THE MODERN MAN

I AM deeply sensible of the honor of being selected to address this company of men. To consider with you the great themes of the spirit is indeed a high honor, and I shall seek to be worthy of this rare privilege by expressing with utmost frankness my sincere convictions on these topics so vital to us all. At the close of each address the subject will be open for discussion. By the give and take of free debate the benefit of these evenings spent together will be reciprocal. In gatherings such as this we are continuing the best traditions of New England. This little stretch of territory has been famous for industrial leadership. Men like you have taken riches out of these iron hills. Yet, notable as has been its indus-

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trial supremacy, New England has been especially distinguished for intellectual astuteness and moral power. While our fathers toiled incessantly with the hand and with the brain for material wealth, they were not forgetful of the sovereign matters of the spirit. They realized that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. After the tasks of the day they gathered about their spacious hearths, and before the blazing fires

“reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.”

This habit not only sharpened the New England mind to finest subtilty, and toughened its fibre; it created the rigorous New England conscience; it gave to our fathers a profound realization of the significance of life; it enlarged and glorified their imagination, and nourished in them an august sense of eternal truths. For a body of business and professional men to meet together at the close of the day to discuss the stupendous themes of religion is certainly in keeping with the noblest

memories of New England. It places us in a great and holy succession.

Doubtless you were all reared in the strict faith of the fathers and trained in its stern morality. I surmise that most of you have considerably modified your inherited religious conceptions, finding it impossible to look at life as your fathers viewed it. Being intellectually awake, you are aware that modern scholarship has removed many of the ancient landmarks, and that the new light pouring into the world from recent scientific investigation has dissolved many of the old creedal structures. Being absorbed in practical affairs, while you dimly know of altered conditions, probably you have lacked the leisure to inform yourselves of the changes which have taken place. You have left the shelter of the ancestral faith and have not yet built for your minds a new home which is complete and satisfactory. For a man needs a domicile to protect his mind from spiritual storms and terror as really as he needs a house to guard his body from the inclemency of the weather. I imagine that you often wonder how much is left of the

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old faith, and ask whether the new equals the old in power of comfort and in authority over conduct. Perhaps you even go further and question whether the men of to-day can have religious certitude and be as sure as were the fathers of the reality of the things of the spirit.

My task is not the ambitious one of answering all these interrogations. But according to my ability I hope to make evident and persuasive the new approach to religious truth, to describe the knowledge which has come to this generation through its earnest study of nature and of man, and to set forth the essential verities of religion as they are held to-day by constructive modern scholars.

I

The Modern World

First, let us consider the changed world in which men live to-day. Dante has been called the "voice of ten silent centuries." In his "mystic, unfathomable song" the mind of the Middle Ages, its ruling ideas, its philosophy,

find imperishable expression. The poet believed in a snug little universe which could be interpreted by a complete system of thought. The earth he conceived to be the centre of the material creation, with heaven beyond the stars and hell underneath the crust of the earth. Man, in the exercise of his free will, merits the one or the other. That he may walk in the way of spiritual and temporal happiness God has provided two authoritative guides, the Pope and the Emperor. A closely reasoned theology attempted to interpret all man's experiences with the divine. Through the fall of Adam the trail of the serpent lay over all humanity. Man, a finite being, could not pay this debt of sin against infinite holiness. An infinite penalty was demanded. Hence the God-man suffered to the full the punishment required by justice and canceled the obligation. By baptism the soul entered into the merits of Christ and was freed from the eternal consequences of sin. Whatever sins were committed by penitent spirits after baptism must be expiated in this world and in purgatory. For the redeemed there was provided a stately heaven whose

angels were classified and whose hierarchies were named. For the reprobate there was an endless hell of "anatomized damnation."

Copernicus shattered forever this tiny shell of mediæval cosmogony; the Reformation challenged the infallibility of the papal system; the political enfranchisement of the people destroyed the pretentious theory of the divine right of kings. But theology remained Ptolemaic and mediæval. Men still believed in the six days of creation, they counted six thousand years since Adam, and they had a well-defined scheme for saving humanity from the results of the Fall. Within our own generation this closed system of thought has received a blow as fatal as that which shivered the cosmogony of Dante's time.

In 1859 Darwin published his "Origin of Species." This patient investigator did not originate the theory of evolution, as he is popularly supposed to have done. The conception of a progressively developing order of nature was a familiar one to philosophers, but Darwin gave an exposition of the probable method of the origin of species which was at once so

clear and so well substantiated that a philosophical speculation was transformed into a scientific generalization. Darwinism has been greatly modified and evolution is still an hypothesis, but beyond question the "Origin of Species" was the chief initial impulse to the movement of thought which has carried the modern man completely away from the standpoint and the conceptions of former generations. His point of view, his methods, the prevailing spirit in which he performs his tasks are changed. He lives in a universe measureless in duration and limitless in space. The conviction of a progressive rather than a static order, both in nature and in history, is fixed in the educated mind. It is as generally assumed that an academically trained man is an evolutionist of some sort as it is assumed that he is a gravitationist. In all sciences this generalization is recognized as a working hypothesis. Within our own generation its revolutionary influence has been felt in every department of knowledge. The men now living have been required to look at the old faith in this new light. Some of you remember the

clash of conflict when the new views first met the old, and all of us were born before the sound of battle died away.

The theological implications of this new method of approach to religious truth are very clear. The world, instead of being six thousand years old, tells its years by the hundreds of thousands. Man no longer considers himself a newcomer; he traces his lineage to a remote antiquity. Instead of the fall of the race in Adam, we assert the ascent of man. Life and destiny no longer appear simple and explicable, but open to us with fresh wonder and hope.

II

The Modern Man

Because one lives in the twentieth century he is not necessarily a modern man. He may have the soul of a mediæval inquisitor clothed in modish fashion. The modern man is one who is controlled by the spirit and tendencies which are characteristic of this age. He is different from his fathers because he has established a new starting-point from which to

do his thinking; his habitual mood is peculiar; his methods are unique; old motives have been outgrown, and he insists upon examining truth with a searching test not always employed in the past. Altogether he is different from the fathers both in attitude of mind and in habits of thought.

Men of to-day begin their thinking from a new basis. The time-honored method has been to assume some prominent fact, such as the sin of man or the sovereignty of God, or some theory of inspiration and revelation, and upon this rear a logically constructed system of thought. The faults of this method are obvious. Disprove the major premise and the superstructure collapses, to the confusion of believers. We are seeking more secure foundations. We appeal from the authority of every spiritual Cæsar to life. We would know what man has learned in his age-long experience. The laws he has discovered, the spiritual adventures he has passed through, the intuitions he has developed, the religious consciousness which his long journey has fashioned, we believe furnish the only sufficient facts from

which to draw our conclusions. We base our thinking not upon an authority which may be questioned, or a metaphysics which may be disproved, but upon the facts revealed by experience. Accumulated experience quickens insight into the nature of things. The modern mind trusts more to its intuitions than to its logic. It highly esteems the universal and spontaneous judgments of spiritual men, for the supreme truths are spiritually discerned. To the facts of experience and to the intuitions of the soul it entrusts itself. Its knowledge of the foundations will enlarge, but the base is rational and secure.

With so broad a field of observation the modern man must be free and open-minded. In a scientific age he must have that spirit so finely described by Mr. Huxley: "Sit down before a fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads." Not since the creation have there been so many minds, free in their action and scientific in their methods, employed upon religious truth. It would be inconceivable if

the harvest of knowledge and vision were not rich.

The modern man is eminently practical. He has little taste for those lofty and refined speculations which produce no perceptible difference either in character or in conduct. He keeps close to the known, and to what approves itself as vital to the individual and to society. He is not interested in a gospel which is largely occupied in showing how God can forgive sin, and provide a way of escape from the wrath to come. It must be able to save men now from the power of evil and the blighting curse of fear.

Some of the old motives for living the religious life are no longer operative, while others are receiving greater prominence. From primitive Christianity to the present day, superstitious fear has been a universal and sovereign compulsion driving men into the church. They crowded the sanctuaries and accepted the creeds through dread of something after death. Such fear is no longer a primal motive. Few to-day believe in the prison-house of torture which so affrighted former generations. This rapidly

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vanishing motive is being replaced by two others, which, though never absent from the religious life of the past, are now more than ever prominent. One is the desire to be right with God and man. We know that these right relations must be achieved and sustained. We are aware that we come far short of fulfilling our own ideals. We are conscious that we need help. We are persuaded that the law of the spirit of life in Christ will set us free from the law of sin and death. We confess and obey him because he enables us to be the men we wish to be and to live the life we desire to live. Closely akin to this is another motive. We wish our lives to count for something in the world. We are anxious to make a real contribution to the race. Therefore we put ourselves in line with that Increasing Purpose which is unfolding through the ages. We wish to take our proper place in God's plan and to bear our share in the fight he is waging against the powers of darkness. Men to-day in ever enlarging numbers are living the religious life as in the Great Taskmaster's eye, to apprehend that for which they have been apprehended of God.

The modern man looks at truth with a very different perspective from that familiar to the fathers. He has been so powerfully influenced by the doctrine of evolution that he is persuaded that man grows in his apprehension of truth, and that God's revelation of himself is progressive. No perfect system of truth, or institutional plan, has come down from heaven to men to be preserved inviolate at all hazards. Ideas and institutions, he realizes, must be studied in their origin and development, and are not to be considered as crystallized into a permanent form. New light shines upon both church and doctrine when he perceives that they are not final, but are progressive disclosures whose form is determined by historical conditions.

The changed world has produced a changed man. With liberated mind, from a fresh point of departure, with an enlarged perspective, by new methods, governed by high motives, applying a novel test to truth, the typical religious thinker of our times approaches the realities of the spirit confident that new glory will stream from the ancient fountains.

The question of the date of the beginning of the modern world is being vigorously discussed in Germany. The Reformation is the boundary usually assigned to the dominance of the mediæval spirit. But the reformers held the Catholic conception of creation, the fall of man, and the theology growing out of it. Most of them maintained the necessity of the union of church and state and the authority of the civil powers in matters spiritual. Their views of the world and their methods of reasoning were not dissimilar to those of Catholic theologians. The mediæval shadow has rested upon the world even until now.

The truth is that the modern day has had a gradual dawning. Dante has been called the first modern man. His lofty spirit, like

“ a poising eagle, burnt
Above the unrisen morrow,”

catching some gleams of the coming day. At the Reformation the whole east was aglow. The morning waxed brighter when the church was separated from the state and the authority of king and bishop was cast off. But the modern as distinguished from the mediæval world

did not come in its glory and joy until the notion of a static universe was discarded, and men, knowing that the forms of reality are ever changing, felt free to follow truth into all her hiding-places. There have been free individuals in all the Christian centuries, but ours is the first generation since the days of the primitive church which has enjoyed the freedom of faith.

III

Two Schools of Religious Thought

Modern religious thinkers assemble themselves into two quite distinct groups. One interprets spiritual realities through the medium of nature, while the other searches the spirit of man and his history. When the hypothesis of evolution first assumed sovereign importance, many men felt that now for the first time faith could rightly understand and defend its history. Some of them were trained scientists, and into the world of the spirit they brought the temper and method of scientific research, essaying the bold task of formulating religious conceptions through the medium of

their enlarged perceptions of nature. One writer of this school who won popular recognition was Mr. John Fiske. That he was an accurate and convincing writer on scientific themes Charles Darwin himself attests. "I never in my life," he writes Mr. Fiske, "read so lucid an expositor, and therefore thinker, as you are." The title of one of his books, "Through Nature to God," throws light upon his habitual method. He studied the "Idea of God," the "Destiny of Man," the "Life Everlasting," in the fresh light which had come to him through nature. Another author of equal fame was Mr. Henry Drummond. Profoundly interested both in religion and in the facts of the laboratory, he wrote "Natural Law in the Spiritual World," and the "Ascent of Man." These titles sufficiently indicate his attempt to study man and his spiritual life through the new knowledge of nature and its laws. Other writers less widely known found genuine enrichment to faith in tracing the wisdom of God in creation. "Through Science to Faith," "The Religion of an Evolutionist," "Science and Religion," are the names of books written

by this school of thought, and they indicate its method.

Quite distinct from this group is another body of thinkers, who, while they are not blind to the light from nature and work in an atmosphere modified by its influence, are supremely concerned with the spiritual constitution of man and his experiences with God. They believe that the Eternal has revealed himself in the personal spirit of man more fully and intimately than in the grandeur of the material universe. God is to be studied in his highest work, which is the personal spirit of man. Personality, therefore, rather than nature, is their master word. They affirm that the higher life of man reveals more clearly than the processes of the chemical laboratory the deepest reality of the universe. Personality is the golden key unlocking the mystery of our world and of our cosmos, or there is no key. What is loftiest in man must be the best interpreter of what is loftiest in the universe. The spirit of man in its varied religious experiences, and especially that spirit as it has come to its perfection in Jesus, is the supreme fact

for investigation. The thinkers to whom persons and personal relations are of supreme importance have written many books. The titles of some familiar volumes will sufficiently indicate this school and its trend of thought: "Through Man to God," "Theology and the Social Consciousness," "Social Law in the Spiritual World," "Personality and the Christian Ideal."

These two groups are not antagonistic, but are mutually supporting. Those who find in man the key to the universe need to study the order and vastness of the cosmos to comprehend the wonder and greatness of God, while the approach to him only through nature tends to pantheism and the submergence of personal spirit in the deeps of natural forces. We construct our truest conceptions of God and his ways by combining those revelations of himself which he gives through nature and through man.

IV

Religious Authority

The modern man, acknowledging that new light has come to this generation through our

enlarged views of nature and our more comprehensive study of man, inevitably asks himself whether the added light gives more or less certainty to his faith. Religion should speak with a voice of unhesitating authority. It should point out the way of life so clearly that the wayfaring man need not err therein. It must declare a law of conduct whose sanctity cannot be doubted. The light it sheds must be from the Eternal Fountain. Its premises must be clear of all suspicion of being the shining and phantasmal dreams of men. We have received no new light, but rather fatal darkness, if the Rock of Ages does not appear more distinct, more extended, and more impregnable. We have delusion and not light unless religious certainty is increased.

The mediæval man had peace and joy because an infallible church had spoken. Our fathers replaced the authority of the church by the authority of a book. If we give up the belief in verbal inspiration and in the infallibility of a hierarchy of priests, have we found something more credible? Has the assurance which made our fathers strong in battle, and

gave our mothers calm in the night of their sorrows, been increased unto us?

A simple illustration will make clear how august and indisputable is the authority which speaks to the modern man. A friend, having spent the evening with Carlyle, was saying good night as the two stood upon the doorstep. The visitor, looking up, remarked on the glory of the starlit night. The Seer gazed for a time on the inconceivable majesty of the heavens and then exclaimed, "Mon, it's just awful!" But suppose that Carlyle, after glancing upward, had said, "I see no stars! I never heard of them! What are they? I perceive only blackness above." The visitor would have been dumbfounded. Let us imagine that he goes through Chelsea and London questioning all whom he meets, and that he finds that no one can see the stars or has ever heard of them. Amazement possesses him. He hurries to the library, but he can find no book which hints at any brightness in the heavens. He detects no intimation that in all the preceding ages any one has seen the stars! He is the only human being who has

had that vision! He can draw but one conclusion. If he alone can discern the black depths above to be studded with stars, he must be subject to an hallucination. He may well doubt his sanity.

But the facts are far otherwise. The same constellations he sees, Carlyle sees also. Every one in the city who looks up has the same perception. He finds that men in the Middle Ages were studying the mystic influences of these same clusters. The Hebrew Psalmist sang of their glory, and the Babylonians bowed before them in awe and wonder. He knows that the stars exist because of the testimony of unnumbered generations. They have seen the vision. They have tested it by every means available, and they have not been put to confusion. We live in unperturbed certainty of the reality of the stars, though no man was ever caught in the silver mazes of the Pleiades, or grasped the sheath of Orion's sword. The vision of the individual has been verified by the vision of the race. The universal consciousness has rendered its verdict in favor of lights above, and trained minds have discovered and

explained their governing laws. The general consciousness, verified and interpreted by experts, gives us certainty of the stars.

Let us suppose that instead of alluding to the stars Carlyle's guest had spoken of God, human sinfulness, duty, and the Sage had exclaimed: "God, sin, duty! what do you mean? Those words represent no thoughts that ever entered my mind, or any experience of my life." The man would be puzzled and would doubt Carlyle's sanity. Suppose that he wanders about the city, questioning every one whom he meets, yet finding none who even so much as dreamed of a Superior Being. He consults the records of the past and finds no intimation that any man ever thought of Deity, or duty, or redemption. Poor man! he realizes that an asylum for the insane is his proper home.

But how different are the facts. To Carlyle the ideas of God, man's frailty, duty, are more familiar than the brightness of the stars. Their mystery and significance constantly fill his mind. Every man in England and throughout the world knows something of their meaning.

In the eighteenth century Wesley proclaimed a gospel of reconciliation. In the thirteenth century the Schoolmen pondered the Almighty's way of redemption. In ancient Greece Æschylus lifted the drama to the elevation of moral ideas. Upon the banks of the Nile, in Nineveh, in Jerusalem, these conceptions were familiar. Humanity's consciousness of spiritual realities resembles in its universality its sense of physical reality. Germany's most profound philosopher, Immanuel Kant, once declared: "Two things fill my soul with always new and increasing wonder and awe, and often and persistently my thought busies itself therewith:— the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." Kant was as well aware of his moral personality and its necessary connections with an august moral order as he was of the material splendors above his head. Men have experienced a material world, and they believe in it. They have also experienced a spiritual world. They have come in contact with God, and they have been persuaded that from the Eternal there has come to them light, and wisdom, and power. The

sovereign religious ideas are the expression of the thinking and life of the race.

Moreover, the universal religious experience finds illumination and exposition in the poets, prophets, philosophers, and spiritual leaders of all peoples. These loftiest spiritual geniuses are nourished, trained, and made strong by a world of unseen realities in which they habitually live. Deep-souled men, their beings are rooted in the hidden power which binds together the things that are seen ; sensitive men, they hear and interpret that still, small voice which speaks its mystic word amid the jangling noises of the world. These men are experts, and the concurrent testimony of experts must be our standard in spiritual as in other matters. He who stands upon the mountain-top and sees the farthest can speak authoritatively to those below. And the One whose name is above every name, the supreme spiritual mind of the world, must be the ultimate authority.

The basis of our certitude in religion is our personal experience with God, corrected and validated by the experiences of countless generations of men, interpreted by seers and meas-

ured and explained by the words, the spirit, the life of Jesus.

The authority of the mediæval man was the thought and experience of the Roman Church as formulated by its Councils and its Popes. The authority of the Puritans was a Book which contained the records of God's way with a peculiar people and his fullest disclosure in Christ. We have all that the Catholic has, plus the testimony of the Spirit as he has spoken in all communions during the Christian centuries. Like the Puritans we treasure the faith of the Hebrews, but we verify our conclusions by the ways of God with all tribes and nations. And with the Holy Church throughout the world we look to the mind of Christ as the complete expression and sufficient standard of spiritual truth.

“The great and indeed the only ultimate source of our knowledge of nature and of her laws,” says Sir John Herschel, “is experience, by which we mean not the experience of one man only, or of one generation, but the accumulated experience of all mankind in all ages, registered in books, or recorded in tradition.”

We live in a spiritual as well as in a physical world, and we learn its reality and its laws in the same way — by the experience of all ages revealed and uttered by the most competent minds.

What better lamp is there to guide our feet than the accumulated wisdom of thousands of generations of righteous men? What court of final appeal is so near infallibility as the religious life of the race explained and attested by its supreme spiritual leader?

“And I heard behind me,” said St. John, “a great voice, as of a trumpet . . . as the voice of many waters.” That clear and multitudinous voice, coming out of the past, and uttering itself through the lips of Jesus, is our authority, and it is sufficient. “Behold the days come that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it.” This inner book of the law, written by the finger of God in human hearts, verified by experience, and expounded by Jesus Christ, is all the authority we need.

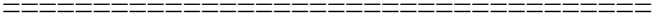
II

THE BIBLE

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The Bank of Wisdom publish all works of human interest, we scorn no ideas of serious thought. Ideas and beliefs some may think “dangerous” and would want to hide, we seek to reproduce and distribute for the consideration and intellectual development of every human mind. When peace and understanding is established throughout the world it might be said that humanity has achieved an acceptable degree of civilization, but until that longed for time we must never cease to search for greater truth and a higher morality for humanity.

The wealth of thought hidden in obscure books of past ages makes festinating reading, and as much of this original thought was suppressed by the sheer power of the established systems of the time, these ideas may well be those needed for the future progress. One thing is certain, the belief systems we have are not the ones we need.

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II

THE BIBLE

THE modern man has many difficulties with his Bible. He was brought up to believe it to be the inspired word of God, every recorded fact being genuine and every teaching true. It is so completely inspired that God dictated it to men who served as his amanuenses. Every statement must be accepted as authoritative, a text taken from Leviticus being as binding as one found in Mark. This strict theory of verbal inspiration has led to the formulation of many grotesque dogmas, which make religion appear irrational and ridiculous. A passionate outburst of the Psalmist, joined to the gorgeous rhetoric of Isaiah, and set into one of the sublime visions of the Seer of Patmos, has produced many an astounding doctrine. But these uncouth dogmas have not been so injurious to most of us as the belief that a book so inspired must be accepted from "cover to cover." To doubt the historicity of the Jonah incident, or to discredit the story of an

axe floating upon the waters of Jordan, or of the sun standing still over the Plain of Ajalon was to question the very fundamentals of religion and to place one's self in the ranks of skeptics.

We know the powerful influence which the Bible has had upon the institutions of the modern world. Its truths gave strength and grace to the characters of our fathers. Its sublime poetry elevated their imaginations, its exceeding great and precious promises were unfailing springs of comfort, its wisdom they followed as above mortal wisdom. Reverence for the book is wrought into the fibres of our natures as part of a noble heritage. We feel instinctively that any diminution of its spiritual authority would soon report itself in feeble men and in a devitalized nation. How may the Bible be unto us as unto our fathers the guide and way of life, and yet be revered without the degradation of our mental integrity?

I

The Records of an Inspired Race

The first fact which appears, even to a casual student of the Scriptures, is that they are

a library of sixty-six volumes, bound together under one cover. These writings from the pens of many authors have been brought together because they are the original documents of a supreme historical movement. The Jews were a unique people. As the Romans had a peculiar insight into those structural laws which bind men together, and could formulate them into codes for the government of the world; as the Greeks had singular perception of the beautiful, and could give it imperishable expression in architecture and sculpture; so the Jews had an extraordinary intuition into the moral framework of the world. The men who most fully embodied the loftiest genius of their race experienced God and learned his ways. They sought after God and found him. Their talent was prophetic, as the talent of the Romans was administrative and that of the Greeks artistic. Under the providential government of the world they were gifted for a special task. The Bible, considered from a human standpoint, is a record of the unfolding of their religious genius. It recounts their adventures in their search for God, their blind stum-

bling into darkness, their intuition of spiritual truths, their broadening vision, the fulfillment of the nation's essential spirit in the supreme person of the race and of history, Jesus Christ.

Considered from a divine point of view the Bible is a record of God's progressive disclosure of himself through a nation to the world. To call it an inspired book is not so comprehensive or so true a statement as to speak of it as the record of an inspired movement; an assembling of the original documents which attest and interpret a providential course of history through a chosen people for the religious instruction of humanity.

The structural ideal of our own nation is individual liberty under law. This idea has had an origin, a development, an interpretation, and an incarnation. If some one should gather under one cover the Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, Cromwell's speeches, Bradford's "Journal," the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the speeches of Webster, the maxims of Benjamin Franklin, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the impassioned verse of Whittier, Lincoln's

“Gettysburg Address,” the war songs of the nation, we should have a volume analogous to the Bible. Both would be a collection of original documents recounting the history and manifesting the spirit of a movement of world-wide importance. Both would disclose a providential endowment and training of a great people in the interests of the race. Both would show the origin and trace the progress of a special purpose of God for the good of mankind.

Such a conception of the Bible as a collection of many books, selected and unified by a central truth, written by many men in different periods of history and at different stages of development, made up of traditions, war songs, laws, history, which greatly vary in value, yet reveal man’s spiritual growth and God’s progressive revelation, is now the one commonly held among us.

II

Oriental Method of writing History

Higher critics¹ may differ among themselves

¹ For some of the ideas immediately following I am indebted to Abbott’s *Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews*.

in matters of details, but there is no divergence of opinion regarding the composite nature of the book. Yet the history was written in a manner very distinct from the methods we use. A modern historian, after collecting and digesting his data, tells his story in a way clearly to indicate his individual contribution and judgment. He is extremely sensitive to the charge of plagiarism. By footnotes he indicates his authorities for important statements. By quotation marks he distinguishes the words and sentences he has incorporated in his narrative from other sources. The Oriental method is the opposite of this conscientious discrimination of the individuality and responsibility of each writer. As in their social system, so in their histories, the individual is lost in the whole. If the story is told, it matters little who tells it. Oriental histories are for the most part compilations. The author weaves together his documents and authorities into a continuous narrative. He uses no quotation marks, seldom states the sources of his information, and interjects without acknowledgment into a paragraph the words and

opinions of another. "It is the law of Oriental history writers," says Renan, "that one book should annihilate its predecessor. The sources of a compilation rarely survive the compilation itself. A book in the East is rarely recopied just as it stands. It is brought up to date by the addition to it of what is known, or supposed to be known, from other sources. The individuality of the historical book does not exist in the East; it is the substance, not the form, which is held of importance, and no scruple is felt about mixing up authors and styles. The end sought is to be complete, and that is all."

III

The Priest and the Prophet

The historical books of the Old Testament, besides being compilations, represent two clearly distinguishable types of mind, that of the priest and that of the prophet. With them we are familiar. These two have walked together from the beginning down through all the centuries of religious history. The first considers himself to be set apart from others

by a special ordination. He usually emphasizes this distinction by his dress and often by his manner and voice. He worships God by ritual, and is interested in institutions rather than in truth. His virtues are reverence for the past, obedience to authority, a love of order and decorum, and a developed sense of the beautiful as expressed in ceremonials and architecture, rather than in the stars and meadows. Generally he prefers cathedrals to mountains. His faults are an over-emphasis of the value of institutions. To preserve and honor them he will too often sacrifice the truth. He is the defender and protector of organization, and not a fearless seeker after truth in every field. His unquestioning subservience to authority dwarfs his reason and judgment, while his separateness from his fellows tends to hypocrisy.

The prophet is a born adversary of the priest, and his characteristics are antipodal in almost every respect. He is an individualist, and is impatient of authority. Believing that he meets the Most High more intimately in his own soul than in sacrament or in book, his conscience has for him august sanctity.

God he will obey and not man. All earthly powers are insignificant in comparison with the Judge of all the earth. The true prophetic mind is open to God's voice whether he speaks through nature, in the course of history, or in the drift of circumstance. It seeks to know the truth and willingly goes alone to obey it. The evil tendencies of the prophet are egotism and a defiance of needful convention which leads to brutal iconoclasm. His sense of personal rectitude and his clear vision often make him intolerant of the opinions of others, and frequently he degenerates into a common scold.

The priest is in danger of excluding the new and larger truth from his venerable institutions. The prophet often fails to incorporate his nobler visions in becoming and effective forms.

Upon whatever century we lift the curtain we find the prophet and the priest confronting each other, always in earnest debate, often in bloody conflict. Their hostile spirits appear in ritualists and non-ritualists. Their characteristics distinguish high church from low ; the conservative from the independent.

Now the shadow of the priest and the shadow of the prophet rest plainly upon the pages of the Old Testament. Each has interpreted history according to his own sovereign principle. We can readily understand that if a man of prophetic mind were to write the history of England he would be most interested in the people themselves, their condition, the structural principles of their civilization, the social and economic forces which moulded their destinies, and the genius and achievements of the national leaders. But one of Dr. Pusey's temperament would treat of the institutions of England, its throne and the laws of succession, the kings in their religious character, and their attitude toward the Church. The progress of the country would coincide in his mind with the prosperity of the Established Church. He would describe its development, its great bishops, its charities and its rituals, and would approve or condemn all popular movements according to their influence on the National Church.

IV

The Clue to the Documents

There is indisputable evidence that both the priests and the prophets have written the history of Israel in their characteristic mode, to make enduring the facts and truths which they thought of chief importance. We have in the Old Testament two narratives of God's dealings with his chosen people from the reign of David to the Babylonish Captivity, covering a period approximately from 1000 to 600 B.C. Two historians survey the same four centuries, yet how different is their spirit, and how diverse are their judgments of the events in the national history which best reveal Jehovah's character and purposes. First and Second Chronicles, practically one book, are evidently written by an ecclesiastic who identified the religion of the Hebrews with its churchly form. He tells of the organization of the priestly hierarchy, he records minutely the genealogies of the tribes, gives a careful list of the cities of the Levites, exalts the glory of Solomon, and elaborately describes the

building of the Temple and its ceremonies. He is evidently a high churchman who considers religion to be inseparable from Jerusalem, the Temple worship, and the formal priesthood. The Temple is the centre of the world, and Judah is God's peculiar people. After the federation of the ten tribes they ceased to interest this writer. The deeply instructive, romantic career of Elijah is passed over, for he is not of the succession! He is not the robed priest ministering at the altar! He is ignored as a high church historian would ignore Wesley. Northern Israel, being separated from the Temple, is as uninteresting to this priestly writer as the nonconformists of England would be to an ardent Puseyite.

Covering the same period we have First and Second Kings, one book in two volumes. This narrative as clearly came out of the prophetic school as Chronicles issued from the priestly. Here alone we have reported the severe and stormy character of Elijah and the marvelous activities of Elisha. When kings appear on the scene, it is that they may form the background to set off the greater grandeur

of the prophet. The writer does not hesitate to describe the pollution of the Temple and the sins of the priests. So thoroughly prophetic is the Book of Kings in its spirit and interests that Jewish tradition assigned its authorship to Jeremiah, while good critics affirm that Chronicles and Ezra were originally one book.

The difference in the documents treating of the history of Israel from David onward naturally gave scholars the clue to the divergencies of statement and the peculiarities of style found in the annals preceding the reign of that monarch. They noticed that in certain portions of Genesis God was always spoken of as Jehovah, and that these sections have a marked individuality of style. In other portions God is named by the Hebrew word *Elohim*, and the style and interest of those parts are easily distinguishable from the Jehovah section. It would seem, then, to be an easy matter to separate the early history into two original documents, the Jehovistic and the Elohist; and where the words Lord God are used, or Jehovah Elohim, to say that the two documents were here combined. This at

first was the easy solution, but further investigation showed that certain sections of Genesis used the word Elohim and yet were decidedly similar in style to the Jehovah documents and sustained its assertions of facts, while other Elohim sections were written in a very different style and contradicted the Jehovistic documents in important matters. This discovery has led to the conclusion that the early history of Israel as we have it is a composite of at least three principal documents, known respectively as "J," "E," and "P"; the latter so called because it is thoroughly priestly in form and is preoccupied with the same interests as the Book of Leviticus and the priestly sections of Exodus and Numbers.

V

The Story of the Hebrew People

Instead of entering upon a discussion of the documentary structure of the Old Testament, which would necessarily be somewhat dry, I can best present the nature and origin of the Scriptures by giving in brief outline the story of the development of the Hebrew people, or

of God's progressive revelation of his character and purposes to them, as it has been reconstructed by modern scholars.

About the year 1500 B.C. there was a migration of Semitic people from Mesopotamia, along the well-trodden ways of commerce, toward those lands in southwestern Asia which were under the powerful protection of Egypt, then the dominant empire of the world. In this migration were probably the ancestors of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, as well as Israel. Many scholars maintain that the patriarchs were historic characters, and that the story of their lives is authentic biography. Some, however, consider these interesting tales to be the sagas of a primitive people and the personification of tribal characteristics. There is certainly much in the record, similar to the traditional and poetic elements in the earliest annals of all great peoples, to sustain this conclusion.

Under the stress of famine the Hebrews moved into Egypt and settled down in the pasture lands of the Nile Delta about the year 1400 B.C. As the residence in Egypt lasted about three generations, or approximately a

hundred years, we may place the date of the Exodus around the year 1300. Under a great leader, who was either Moses, or, as some one has wittily said, another man of the same name, they succeeded in freeing themselves from their Egyptian taskmasters. To avoid the border fortresses, Moses led the people to the desert by way of the Red Sea, crossing at a favorable point. At Mount Sinai he held high communion with Jehovah. Here by this rugged and storm-encircled mountain a nation was organized and a spiritual religion was born. Moses had been trained in all the learning of the Egyptians. Rawlinson, in his "History of Egypt," informs us that "the primary doctrine of the esoteric religion undoubtedly was the real essential unity of the Divine Nature. The sacred texts taught that there was a single Being, 'the sole producer of all things, both in heaven and earth, himself not produced of any' . . . 'the only true living God, self-originated' . . . 'who exists from beginning' . . . 'who made all things, but has not himself been made.'" This pure spirit, perfect in wisdom, goodness, and power, was not to be represented by any

symbol, and his name was incommunicable. The deities of popular mythology were either his attributes personified or nature deified.

This high God, who was a philosophical abstraction to the wise men of Egypt, was to Moses the supreme Reality. To this true God, the statesman-prophet would dedicate the people. They were to be holy because he was holy. They, on their part, were to serve only him, and he in return would be their God and give them national prosperity. It was the privilege of Moses to do what no man had done before. He rooted morality more deeply in religion, and organized a nation around the central idea that the sovereign duty of the individual and of the nation was to obey a holy God. Lofty minds before his day had framed a spiritual conception of the Ultimate Reality. Other lawgivers had guarded individual rights and social morality by the sanctions of religion. Moses rendered a twofold service. As a prophet he made impressive the ethical nature of religion, and as leader he made the union of morality with religion the organic law of a great people. He created a commonwealth whose corner-

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stone was neither commerce nor militarism,
but obedience to God.

His imperishable monument is the Ten
Commandments, or the Ten Words. Ewald
gives the original form as follows:—

I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of
the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I

1. Thou shalt have no other god before me.
2. Thou shalt not make to thee any image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy
God in vain.
4. Thou shalt remember the Sabbath day to
sanctify it.
5. Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.

II

1. Thou shalt not kill.
2. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
3. Thou shalt not steal.
4. Thou shalt bear no false witness against thy
neighbor.
5. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.

The fuller and more familiar form was pro-
duced by the addition of explanatory clauses.

These Ten Words are the introduction to the Book of the Covenant, the oldest book that is incorporated completely in the text of the Scriptures. This venerable book, which comprises Exodus twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, twenty-third, and perhaps the first eight verses of the twenty-fourth, contains the substance of the Mosaic legislation. "The book is as remarkable for what it omits as for what it contains. It is practically silent respecting any future life, any sacrificial system, any ecclesiastical ritual, any organized priesthood, any form of what was then universally and is even now generally termed religious duty. It is purely spiritual in its conception of God and of his worship, and wholly non-ritualistic and almost exclusively ethical in its interpretation of the divine will."

There are many scholars who are inclined to deny the Mosaic authorship of the Decalogue. Its simple and austere morality and its evident monotheism seem too exalted for so early an age. Therefore they assign it to the period of the prophets, when the religious consciousness of the nation was more fully

developed. Undoubtedly the conceptions and practice of the common people were far below the lofty standards of the Book of the Covenant, just as the actual morality of Christendom does not conform to the Sermon on the Mount. If so great a summary of religion as the Decalogue came into Jewish history at a later date, why did it produce no ripple of agitation? As Bruce has well inferred, if the writing of the law by Ezra was duly chronicled, it is impossible that "the grandest part of that law, the very essence and kernel of Israel's religion, steals into existence without a father and without a date!"

After the death of Moses there followed the conquest of Palestine. The work was only partially successful. Enough of the original inhabitants remained to be a source of constant annoyance and corruption. The tribes were scattered. The sense of national unity was weak. There was no central capital or sanctuary. John Fiske has affirmed that the period between the close of our American Revolution and the adoption of the Constitution was the most critical period in our his-

tory. During the two hundred and fifty years under the Judges the tribes were in much the same condition as our thirteen states. The looseness of their organization was a constant source of weakness. A strong central government was sorely needed. A king finally was chosen, but he proved not to be great enough to call out the united loyalty of the people. After Saul came David; one of those continental characters whose nature stretched through every zone of power. He changed the army from a mob into an organized body, with captains of tens and captains of hundreds. With these disciplined troops he won a succession of victories. The people were united by a common loyalty. They changed from an agricultural to a commercial nation, and wealth increased. The reign of Solomon was splendid because he completed the work of his father. His task was to unify further the tribes into a nation. To do this he built a magnificent temple at Jerusalem to be the centre of the people's pride and worship. He entered into many matrimonial alliances, not because he was more sensuous than other Oriental despots,

but as a policy of statecraft. He would make the house of David stronger than the house of Saul by a multitude of state marriages. Moreover, in his great wisdom, he opened the ways of commerce with surrounding peoples, that the energy of his subjects might be expended in the acquisition of wealth, rather than in civil war. During his long reign, by his sagacity and the weight of his personal influence, he held together a turbulent and disunited people. After his death the inevitable separation came.

As yet no one had written a continuous history of the people, but the splendor of the reigns of David and Solomon would not un-naturally excite an ambition to set in order the events from the beginning. The Israelites were indeed not without a literature. Besides the Book of the Covenant there were the Song of Deborah and the Lament of David over Saul and Jonathan. There were many memoirs and annals, like the Book of Jasher, the Wars of the Lord, the Book of Samuel concerning the Kingdom, the Chronicles of David, the Acts of Solomon, the Acts of Na-

than, Samuel and Gad, the Book of Jehu, the Sayings of the Seers, besides many psalms and proverbs. About the year 825, while Elisha was prophesying in northern Israel, there occurred in Judah, under Joash, a pronounced awakening of intellectual and spiritual activity. The prophetic party was in the ascendancy, and out of some school of the prophets there issued the first continuous narrative from the creation to the time of the monarchy. The purpose of the authors was both to incorporate everything that would throw light on early conditions and also to illustrate Jehovah's dealings with his people. The style of the narrative is free and pleasing, the characters are distinctly sketched, dialogue is frequently employed, and the vocabulary is picturesque and dramatic. The Deity is called Jehovah, and he is conceived, not as a spirit dwelling in sanctity above the earth, but as one who enters intimately into relationship with men. He walks in the garden at the cool of the day; he descends to learn what the children of men are doing at Babel; he speaks from the burning bush. Jehovah is so truly a glorified hu-

man that he challenges love and obedience. The story is told with the dramatic fervor and simplicity of poetry. The ethics of the writer are clear and simple. To do Jehovah's will in thought and deed is one's whole duty. Right and wrong are not determined by abstract principles, but are conceived as loyalty or disloyalty to the divine will.

This document is called "J" because it is supposed to be Judæan in its origin and because the Deity is designated as Jehovah. It is thoroughly prophetic, both in purpose and in sympathies. It constitutes about one third of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

Some seventy-five years later, during the days of the prophet Amos, or about 750 B.C., a second narrative appeared. In this history, the southern shrine, Hebron, is ignored, and the northern shrines, Bethel and Shechem, are made prominent. In the stories of Joseph, Reuben instead of Judah is recognized as leader. Much space is given to the life of Joseph, the traditional head of the tribe of Ephraim, and to Joshua, the Ephraimite hero.

These characteristics have led to the conclusion that this document came from northern Israel. As Ephraim is the name by which Hosea, the greatest of its prophets, addressed northern Israel, it is called the Ephraimite prophetic narrative. Moreover, in all the accounts of events before Moses, the Deity is designated as Elohim. Its use of Elohim, and its supposed origination in Ephraim has given to this document the designation "E."

The purpose of "E" is less historical and more distinctively didactic and religious than "J." It centres attention on the ideal theocracy rather than on the nation. The prophets and their work are considered as of more importance than kings and their administrations. The dominant purpose throughout the whole is to show that when the people submitted to God's will, as made known by the prophets, they prospered, and when they rebelled, they suffered.

In the Judæan narrative, Jehovah walked the earth and visited Abraham in his tent. In this later history, God is not treated in so picturesque and anthropomorphic a fashion. He

comes in dreams and by his messengers. Only to Moses does he reveal his face. From the darkness of the mountain, or from the pillar of cloud, he speaks to the people. The seventy-five years intervening since the production of the Judæan document had served to purge the traditions of much of their dross and to mature in thoughtful minds the conceptions of the divine character and methods of revelation.

Within a generation after this writing had been given to the world, northern Israel went into captivity and its sacred records, together with the writings of its great prophet Hosea, became the treasured possessions of the southern tribe. During the prophetic and literary activity resulting from the reformation under Joash, "J" and "E" were formed into a connected history in much the same manner as we to-day weave the four gospels together into a continuous story of the life of Christ.

III

THE BIBLE (*continued*)

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III

THE BIBLE (*continued*)

I

The Hebrew Prophets

IN order to connect our account of the manuscripts "J" and "E" and their blending, we have anticipated a little our interpretation of the development of Israel's religious consciousness. The greatness of a people is declared by the character of the masses and the quality of its supreme men. The eminent men of Greece and Rome were generals, statesmen, philosophers, artists. The imperishable names in Israel are the names of her prophets. The genius of the nation was neither artistic nor military, but spiritual.

The work of the prophets often has been misunderstood. They have been valued as men to whom God revealed the future, enabling them to foretell with accuracy coming events. Their uniqueness has been supposed to lie in the wonderful precision of their predictions of

the future. This is an entire misapprehension. The prophet is one who speaks out. He utters the deep things of God to his generation. The prophets of Israel were men possessed of a fervent passion for righteousness. They felt the moral framework of the world. They had a profound sense of the Living God. In the events about them they saw the operations of his will and the glory of his presence. Therefore they interpreted the history of their day in the light of their vision of God. They were reformers and statesmen, and measured men and policies by the "higher law." Because their eye was single, their whole body was full of light. Comprehending the present so clearly, they were sagacious in foretelling the probable future. But prediction was an incidental characteristic of their work. Their supremacy consisted in that quality and elevation of moral genius which gave them insight into the divine character, and enabled them to make a holy and merciful God a reality to their own and to future generations.

The eighth century before Christ was throughout the world one of extraordinary

power and brilliancy. The songs of Homer were assuming their final form; Carthage had recently been founded; and the laws of Lycurgus were still new in Sparta. The year 776 marked the commencement of the Olympiads in Greece, and 753 is the traditional date of the founding of Rome by Romulus. Over Palestine there arose a galaxy of minds, bright with rare religious genius. It was a time of tranquillity in both northern and southern Israel. Riches were increasing; the worship of Jehovah was never more inspiring, yet the priests were worldly and there was no open vision. If the spiritual life of the people be not choked by materialism, a spiritual awakening must come speedily. The first of the divine messengers was Amos, the Hebrew Carlyle, the founder and purest type of a new order of prophecy. Reared in that same wilderness, twelve miles south of Jerusalem, where afterwards John the Baptist was trained and Christ was tempted, he grew up clean of heart and austere in morals. His message was the retributive justice of God. Before Jehovah all men are equal; let them adjust them-

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selves to this Power which makes for righteousness.

A younger contemporary of Amos was Hosea; a man of finer fibre and more sympathetic heart. He was the first of the prophets to preach a gospel of love, and his lesson was learned in the deeps of bitter experience. We can reconstruct his pathetic story by reading between his cryptic lines. In the days of his youth he loved and won the voluptuous beauty, Gomer. Soon after marriage he suspected her fidelity, but he did not cast her off. Finally she left his home to become a common wanton of the streets, and at last was sold as a slave. Yet her husband's solicitude followed her into her degradations and he paid the price of her ransom.

" Weeping blinding tears,
I took her to myself and paid the price
(Strange contrast to the dowry of her youth
When first I wooed her) ; and she came again
To dwell beneath my roof."

But he could not restore her to the old relationship until her soul was purified by works meet for repentance. In the fires of his expe-

rience Hosea found his evangel. "If I," he meditated, "could seek after my erring wife until I won her back to purity, will not Jehovah in leal love seek after his people, even in their sin?" This Old Testament tale of the Prodigal Wife anticipates and parallels the pure gospel of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The interpretation of Hosea's experiences does not lie upon the surface of the prophet's pages, but the story is there plain enough, if we remember that men in ancient times learned their religious lessons in the same way that we learn ours.

Greater than either of his predecessors was Isaiah. He was a lad when Amos was prophesying at Bethel, and began his career while Hosea was writing his last pages. He was more fortunate than they in birth and station, and was gifted with an eloquence so rhythmical and stately that it has been the admiration of subsequent ages. It was in the year King Uzziah died, 740 B.C., that he beheld that vision of the holiness and nearness of God which was his commission as a prophet. To Isaiah's anointed eyes God was a devouring fire

in Israel, burning up all falsehood and evil. He was also head of the nations, working through them to carry out his holy purposes.

A contemporary of the statesman-prophet Isaiah was Micah, a yeoman of an obscure village, who was called to be an evangelist. He is remembered to-day for that incomparable definition of religion which called forth this burst of admiration from Mr. Huxley: "In the eighth century before Christ, in the heart of a world of idolatrous polytheism, the Hebrew prophets put forth a conception of religion which appears to me as wonderful an inspiration of genius as the art of Phidias or the science of Aristotle. 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' If any so-called religion takes away from this great saying of Micah I think it wantonly mutilates, while if it adds thereto, I think it obscures the perfect ideal of religion."

In 722, while Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah were still living, northern Israel was invaded by the Assyrians and a large part of the people

was carried into captivity. Henceforth Judah continues the ancient faith, but not without an immediate and violent reaction toward paganism during the reign of Manasseh. The heavenly bodies were worshiped; altars were built to Astarte; human sacrifices were offered; and the Ark of the Covenant was removed from the Holy of Holies. A reign of terror followed the attempt of faithful servants of Jehovah to stay the prevalent corruption. For fifty years paganism flourished, and the ancient writings with their lofty teachings were forgotten by all except a small circle of religious men who were associated with the Temple.

It is darkest before the dawn, and after this night of paganism there was a brilliant awakening of the prophetic spirit. Sluggish, indeed, would have been the life of the nation, if the momentous events of the time had not stirred its deepest soul. The civilized world was in the throes of revolution. The vast Assyrian Empire, that stupendous despotism that had long held the world in terror, was crumbling. The Medes, upon their terrible horses, were overrunning Asia and threatening great

Nineveh itself. The atmosphere, so electric with impending change, could not but affect Judæa and evoke prophetic utterance. First came Zephaniah, with his wondrous song of doom—the “*Dies iræ, dies illa*”—the requiem of woe familiar to the whole Christian world. About 625 B.C., Nahum, in impassioned sentences, predicts the fall of Nineveh, and Habakkuk, eloquent beyond his contemporaries, declares the retribution which shall humble the pride of the Assyrian. But supreme over them all, and yet the saddest, was Jeremiah, who looked forward to the time when religion should be free from all false restraints and be established upon the law written in the heart.

II

The Discovery of Deuteronomy

In 621 B.C. a powerful revival broke out in Judah, caused not by the thunder of the prophets, but by the discovery of a roll in the archives of the Temple. In the twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of Second Kings we can read the account of the epochal event. Hilkiâh, the high priest, places before King

Josiah the wonderful discovery, and the land is aflame. This roll was the body of our present Book of Deuteronomy. When we seek the origin of the code whose finding so stirred the hearts of the nation to repentance, it seems probable that during the persecutions under Manasseh some unknown prophet, in order to preserve the faith of the fathers, gathered together the manuscripts of the old law, wrote down the traditions of ancient wisdom, and made new application of Mosaic principles to the condition of the nation in his own time. The whole he threw into the form of three great orations and two poems, and hid his work in the Temple library. When it was found in the days of Josiah, it was as though a holy past spoke to a recreant present. This voice from the venerated centuries awoke the nation to repentance and purification.

The discovery awakened intense literary as well as religious activity. History was rewritten under the inspiration of the lofty teachings of Deuteronomy. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, were all reëdited. These Deuteronomic writers were not interested in exact historical

investigation. They were not searching musty documents to establish the exact occurrences of the past. Quite the opposite was their spirit. As teachers of spiritual truth, they would trace the hand of God in history. Not the precise details of former events, but the spiritual significance of Jehovah's dealings with his people they would portray for the instruction of the present and future generations. Their national history appeared to them to teach one unmistakable lesson, and the purpose of the Deuteronomic historians was so to rewrite the annals of the Hebrew people as to bring this lesson into solemn prominence. It may be stated in a sentence: Unfaithfulness to Jehovah is punished by calamities; obedience is rewarded by material prosperity. The older histories were edited to emphasize this philosophy, and facts were modified and interpreted in its interest. The desire of the Deuteronomic historians was to abolish all local sanctuaries and to centralize worship in the Temple at Jerusalem. These local shrines had existed from antiquity, as the early narratives clearly prove.

Yielding to the peculiar Jewish tendency to

think of all good laws as transmitted from the fathers, these editors assumed that the statute providing for one central sanctuary and forbidding all others had been in operation since the Temple was built, or even from the days of Moses. Under this conception the Book of Kings was rewritten and rulers were judged according to their attitude toward the "high places." As none of the kings of northern Israel had worshiped at Jerusalem, but had maintained local sanctuaries, they were all condemned. This Deuteronomic rewriting of Jewish records gives us a document called by scholars "D," and is the third great constituent element of the Old Testament histories. It is prophetic in its spirit, but as its object is to give prominence to the Temple and its worship, it is priestly in its purpose. The centralization of sacrifice or worship institutionalized religion; a distinction was made between clergy and laity, and the church became independent of the state. The benefit of this was apparent thirty-five years later, when the state was destroyed and the church survived. Profoundly as the decrees of the code influenced

the religious life of the people in Josiah's day and altered their historical books, it modified quite as perceptibly the future of the nation. Henceforth the Jewish faith rests heavily on a book; writings may be appealed to as against the living spirit; and the scribe can rebuke the prophet. The externalism of a religion, housed in a temple and expressed in a ritual, will quell the spirit of prophecy. The priest will yet come to his own.

III

The Captivity

Nevertheless, these same priestly elements are to conserve, in the immediate future, the very life of the prophetic religion. In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, carried into captivity ten thousand of the flower of the Jewish nation, and in 586 Jerusalem fell before him, and forty thousand went to weep by the waters of Babylon. It is an interesting question to ask why these exiles were not absorbed into the Babylonian civilization, even as the ten tribes, who, upon their captivity, disappeared entirely from history. Why should

northern Israel be lost and Judah survive? The answer is that Judah had one hundred and thirty-five years more of national life than the northern tribes in which to fix more firmly the racial characteristics. But especially they carried with them into captivity a literature. Besides the history of their nation, they had Deuteronomy and the writings of the prophets. This literature kept alive the fires of patriotic devotion and perpetuated the traditions of the people.

The captivity in Babylon exercised a revolutionary effect upon the faith of the exiles. Their hearts must have been shaken when they first beheld the capital city of their conquerors. Authorities state that it covered an area five times as great as London, and was surrounded by walls of incredible height and thickness, pierced by a hundred brazen gates. Contrasted with the majesty of this metropolis, Jerusalem must have appeared a country village. The most conspicuous object in this wonderful city was the temple of Bel, with its numerous shrines, its elaborate altars, and its golden statue of the deity, towering forty feet

in height. Even the splendor of Solomon's Temple must have seemed tame before the imperial magnificence of this conquering god. There must have been deep searchings of heart regarding the power, or even the reality of Jehovah. Every earthly inducement would lead the captive to forsake the national faith and become identified with the customs and faith of the victors. Judah was tried as in a sieve, and only the pure wheat remained.

But the bitter experiences of the faithful remnant deepened their insight into spiritual realities and stung their genius into marvelous expression. Their calamities produced great men and imperishable literature. Among the captives was Ezekiel, both priest and prophet. He was an ecclesiastical statesman, cast in the same mould in which afterwards were fashioned Hildebrand and Calvin. As Israel was no longer a nation, he would make it a church. He would preserve the people by organizing their lives about religious institutions. As there could be no temple, except at Jerusalem, he would commit the people to the continual service of Jehovah by inducing them

to keep his Sabbath. Their purity from surrounding contamination and their observance of religious ceremonies would form their distinctiveness as a people. But they were some day to return. The books of the prophets which they had brought with them clearly foretold this. To prepare for that time and the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezekiel issued a unique code, describing the ritual and defining the duties of priests, which is found in the last eight chapters of the book bearing his name. Closely allied with him there was evidently a school of priests, who formed a centre of literary activity. They embodied the ancient ceremonial practices in a digest which is called the "Holiness Code" (Leviticus 17-26); they gave to the legal and ritualistic portions of the first books of the Pentateuch substantially their present form.

Literature and spiritual insight, as well as the formulation of the ceremonial law, were the outgrowth of the Captivity. It was the early faith of the Hebrews that Jehovah punished sin with evil and rewarded virtue with prosperity. Calamity, whether visiting the in-

dividual or the nation, was a sure indication that the law had been transgressed. But in the profound humiliation of the Captivity the righteous people were punished, while great Babylon, drunk with the wine of her fornication, flourished in evident prosperity. Why do the wicked flourish, while the innocent suffer? This question, as old as humanity, pressed itself insistently upon the broken-hearted captives. Their traditional solution of the problem of pain, as the evidence of divine wrath against an evil-doer, was evidently inadequate. A more comprehensive answer, which should fit a world where the godly are afflicted, must be given. The sublime epic of Job is the solution offered by some deep-souled captive as he meditated on the strange ways of God. The patriarch was a righteous man, sorely bereaved. His three friends came with the miserable comfort offered by the traditional philosophy that Job's misfortunes were retributions for his sin. Stoutly Job maintained his integrity. Then Elihu, a young man, yet with truer insight than that of the three friends, threw some light on the problem by affirming that

suffering is a method of divine discipline, a test of character. The climax of the drama is reached when God, who always utters his deepest wisdom to man out of the storms and contradictions of life, answered Job out of the whirlwind, asserting that majesty before which man always appears so pitiably insignificant. The divine voice does not solve the problem of pain, but it arouses in the sufferer such a glorious sense of the presence of Jehovah that the heart of Job is satisfied. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." The vision of God, the assured conviction of his nearness and goodness, is the result of afflictions nobly borne, and is their compensation.

Carlyle calls the epic "Every Man's Book," for it deals with a question which confronts every thinking man. The name of the author has not come down to us, but he has bequeathed to us, not what was incidental to his life, but his deep soul-struggle and victory. He shows us how one man found himself and found God. He also reveals the educative power of trouble and its tendency, when

rightly endured, to change a formal faith in God to a clear perception of his presence and loving care. Some scholars put the date of the book earlier, some later, than the Captivity. But it surely expresses most powerfully the experiences and questionings of that time when the traditional theodicy was broken, and larger visions of God and his purposes were inspired in the greater minds.

Another majestic voice speaks out of this darkness to hearten the distressed captives. His name, too, has perished, but he is designated variously as the "Second Isaiah," the "Great Unknown," the "Prophet of the Exile." His writings are to be found in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah, beginning with the fortieth chapter. The style of these chapters is so different from the language and thought of the first section of the book, and the historical situation is so evidently the condition of Babylon at the time of the impending invasion of Cyrus, that it seems far more probable that they are the utterances of an unknown prophet in Babylon than that Isaiah in Jerusalem looked forward over one hun-

dred and fifty years to encourage the possible exiles. Certainly no prophet in the Old Testament uttered more powerfully elemental truths in language of refined and elevated spiritual emotion than the unknown "Prophet of the Exile." The burden of his message is one of consolation. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

This prophet is more than a comforter; he is also an interpreter. His insight into the mysteries of suffering penetrated even farther than that of the author of the Book of Job. In his marvelous description of that mystic figure whom he calls "the Servant of Jehovah," he declares that suffering is more than a discipline of individual character; more than the fiery way by which men are led into the immediate presence of God; it is often vicarious. The innocent suffers for the guilty, and by his stripes the sinful are healed. This is strange doctrine; an absolute breaking away from the honored teaching that pain is God's wrath on the evil-doer. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath this power of the Lord been revealed?" Paul echoed the

same faith when he exclaimed that the crucified Servant is the power of God unto salvation.

Besides being a clear-visioned interpreter of spiritual realities, the Prophet of the Exile had a statesmanlike comprehension of the significance of contemporary events and their bearing upon Israel's future.

IV

The Rebuilding of Jerusalem

The most commanding and admirable figure of pagan Oriental antiquity was Cyrus the Great, a prince wise in statecraft, invincible in war, with a character so full-orbed and far-shining that tradition has thrown around him the charm of legend. As first Media and then Lydia fell before the armies of the Persian, the Prophet in Babylon exulted. Surely the deliverer appointed by Jehovah had come. "I have raised him up for victory and will make straight his ways; he shall build my city again and he shall let my exiles go free." This confident prediction was fulfilled. In November, 538 B.C., Babylon fell, and, in the spring of 537, Cyrus aided the Jews who

wished to return to the land of their fathers by contributions from the royal treasury, and even by restoring such of the sacred vessels of the former temple as could be found. To the number of about fifty thousand they returned. Doubtless as they set forth upon their journey the mountains and hills broke forth before them into singing and all the trees of the fields clapped their hands. They found Jerusalem a waste and the land desolate, yet when the season of the Feast of the Tabernacles was come, an altar had been reared on the spot where had stood the altar of Solomon. But so severe was their struggle to win a livelihood from a reluctant soil that it was seventeen years before the building of the Temple began in earnest.

In 520 B.C. the great work was undertaken with determination: Haggai and Zechariah being the prophets who encouraged the laborers. The Temple was completed in 516, and fifty years later, when the hearts of the people grew faithless, Malachi predicted a day of judgment and the coming of Elijah to purify the nation.

The wretched condition of affairs in Jerusalem was known to the Jews in Babylon. In the spring of 458 B.C. a company of about seventeen hundred men, besides women and children, set out for the home land under the leadership of Ezra the scribe. Soon after his arrival he caused to be read to the people, during a national assembly, the Book of the Law, i.e., the legislative portions of the Pentateuch, which had been compiled and elaborated by the priestly school in Babylon. Thirteen years later Nehemiah, the cupbearer of Artaxerxes, requested and received the commission of Governor of Judæa. In the following year 444, the people bound themselves by an oath to observe the Book of the Law, even as their fathers in the good old days under Josiah had sworn to obey the Deuteronomic code.

The commanding authority now given to the Law permanently determined the legalistic character of the national religion. Naturally the supremacy of legalism created a body of priestly literature which reinterpreted the whole history of the chosen people and gave us the final form in which the Old Testa-

ment narratives have come down to us. We have considered the documents "J" and "E," which gave us the early history of the people in the free prophetic spirit, and the document "D," comprising the Deuteronomic code. We now have reached the period when a new narrative, known to scholars as "P," that is, the priestly account of Israel's early history, assumes its final form. Its purpose is to tell of the origins of the ceremonial institutions and of the law. It recounts, in the first chapter of Genesis, the divine institution of the Sabbath, it dwells on the origin of the rite of circumcision, it furnishes a dramatic setting in the scene at Mount Sinai for all priestly laws as found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. In the second half of the Book of Joshua it describes the allotment of the land of Canaan to the different tribes. The style of this narrative is stately and its conception of God is most noble, as can be seen in reading the opening verses of Genesis. It was not all written by one hand; later additions were made, but the early history of Israel was reshaped into practically its present form somewhere

between 430 and 330 B.C. Thus the first chapters of Genesis were written in a late period of the nation's life.

V

The Night of Legalism

Out of this same priestly atmosphere came First and Second Chronicles, and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This period, which has justly been called the night of legalism, marks a distinct descent from the great day of the prophets. From Moses to Jeremiah the moral law was placed above ritualistic observance. The supreme ideal was a righteous nation. With Ezra we pass from Mosaism to Judaism, when the ceremonial law was elevated to a level with the Decalogue, and an aspiration for a holy church displaced the ancient hope of a righteous nation. Judaism soon degenerated into Phariseeism, the scribes sat in the seat of the prophets, and utterly failed to understand their freedom and moral elevation.¹

¹ I am not unaware that eminent critics give less importance to the influence of the Babylonish Captivity upon Jewish religious thought than has been credited in the foregoing

The encasing of the soul of Israel in the hard and narrow shell of legalism did not, however, pass without a protest. Especially did the law which commanded the putting-away of foreign wives evoke strong disapproval. All Jews did not look upon aliens as hated of Jehovah. One broad-minded, gentle soul, who could not storm like a prophet, chose a surer way of rebuking the intense fanaticism of the time by writing an imperishable idyl, telling the story of Ruth, a Moabitess, who had been received in the days of the fathers into the Hebrew commonwealth, and through the grace of Jehovah had been an ancestress of David himself. The truth of the universal love of God, here embodied in so charming a tale, must have entered into many lowly doors and done much to mitigate the intense hatred of foreigners.

The fierceness of this disdain finds expression in the five chapters (9-14) which are attached to the prophecies of Zechariah. They

pages, and that different dates are assigned to some books, but I think the weight of authority sanctions the interpretation I have given.

are not the words of that prophet, as most scholars agree, but came out of the period (300–280 B.C.) of unrest following the invasion of Alexander the Great. All the East was being subdued by the leaven of Hellenism. Judaism was fighting for existence, and the bitterness of its hatred of foreign influences preserved its life. Here is a characteristic outburst of the feeling of those days: “And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth.”

Before the spirit of prophecy finally died out of Jewish legalism, it flamed up in a most unexpected expression. Professor Cornill, to whom I am indebted for much that has gone before, declares that, after reading the Book of Jonah at least a hundred times, he cannot even now read it without deep emotion. “This apparently trivial book,” he says, “is one of the deepest and grandest ever written.” To

interpret the book as a literal record of facts is to make both the book and ourselves absurd. It is either an allegory, or a satirical romance. If the former, Jonah represents Israel, bigoted and selfish, called to declare God's will to the Gentiles. Failing to fulfill its world-wide mission, the nation is swallowed up in the Babylonish Captivity, and belched forth again. Even then Judah cannot believe that God has any destiny but destruction for the Gentiles. If the book is a satire, its essential meaning is the same. It represents Israel as too narrow to comprehend the wideness of God's love, and the humanity and piety of other peoples, being content to sulk by the withered gourd, because the Gentiles are not devoted to destruction.

VI

Contest with Hellenism

Israel in its varied history had battled with the nature-worship of Canaan, the idolatry of surrounding nations, and the imposing paganism of Babylon. Its fiercest and most dramatic contest, however, was with Hellenism.

Alexander had overrun the known world with his armies. Upon his death in 323 B.C., at the age of thirty-four, a struggle for authority ensued which divided the empire into four kingdoms, Judæa becoming an Egyptian province. For a hundred years the Jews acknowledged the sovereignty of the Ptolemies. In 198, to their unfeigned delight, they became part of the kingdom of Syria. The presence of the Greek in their land both charmed and exasperated the Hebrew. To some the extensive culture, the brilliant social life, the abounding joy of this western people proved irresistible, and they hastened to change their names from Hebrew into Greek, renouncing the austere rites of their country and assimilating foreign thought and manners. Antiochus IV, mistaking the surface movement for the drift of the whole nation, rashly tried to obliterate the Jewish faith, and even ventured to sacrifice swine to Zeus on the altar of Jehovah. Under the Maccabees the unconquerable spirit of the Jews flamed forth, and for a brief period Judah was freed from the oppressor.

In the heat of the contest the Book of

Daniel was written. The opening section is a call to have faith in God, while the second predicts the triumph of the Kingdom. It is history written in the form of prophecy. The actual author speaks in the name of a person who had lived long before.

After this memorable utterance, two inferior books appeared: Ecclesiastes, reflecting the dominant mood of the corrupt Greek period, which held all things to be vanity, yet clinging through doubt and despair to faith; and Esther, a romance describing the unbending pride of the Jew, his faith in Providence, and his quenchless spirit of revenge, which exulted that seventy-five thousand of the nation's enemies were put to the sword.

Passing thus in hurried review the main events in the development of the Jewish people and the literary landmarks they set up, we must not omit the Book of Psalms, a collection of the religious lyrics of the Hebrew people from David to the revolution under the Maccabees, voicing the passions and experiences of nearly eight and one half centuries. Formerly it was believed that David, the sweet

singer of Israel, had composed most of the Psalter. Probably not more than a dozen psalms came from his lyre. The collection, as it has come down to us, is practically the hymn-book of the Second Temple. It is an anthology of the sacred lyrics of the Jews, and preserves for us an invaluable memorial of the spiritual struggle and aspiration of a wonderful people, covering nearly the whole period of their existence as a nation. Proverbs, also, is an assemblage of the crystallized practical wisdom of the sages of Israel. They are more interesting and valuable to us than to our fathers, for we see in them, not the keen common sense of Solomon, but the gathered wisdom of eight centuries.

As we have journeyed with priest and prophet down the centuries of Hebrew history, we have noted the growth of the majestic conceptions of prophetism from Moses to the unknown seer of the Exile. In Ezra and Nehemiah we find the priest and the prophet, ritualist and moralist, meeting upon even terms. With the growing power of the priest, the vision of the prophet failed. Elaborate ceremonialism and

the free spirit of prophecy did not agree. In the turmoil of the Greek period, Phariseeism replaced Judaism, and a further descent was marked. It was surely a decline from Isaiah's message of a Holy Nation to the Holy Church of Ezra. Later, for Holy Church the Pharisees substituted Holy Ego. In such extreme legalism the spirit of prophecy was smothered. Yet God makes the bigotry, as well as the wrath, of man to praise Him. We must not forget that the impenetrable shell of Phariseeism preserved the soul of the nation from the disintegrating influence of Hellenism, until ONE should come who was both prophet and priest, and who elevated the spirit forever above the letter when he declared that "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

VII

The New Testament

The reconstruction of the New Testament has not been so thoroughly accomplished as

the remoulding of the Old. The traditional view that the four gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is now pretty generally abandoned. If the first generation of Christians left any written records of our Lord's life, none has come down to us in its original form. Mark is considered to be the oldest of the gospels. The author of this book, probably John Mark, wrote down the evangelical story as he had received it from eye witnesses, from common report, and from such written accounts as were extant, thus putting in permanent form a general scheme of the ministry of Jesus. Our Gospel of Matthew is a revised edition of Mark, enriched by the insertion of material drawn from other sources, prominent among them being a collection of the Sayings of Jesus, coming not improbably from the pen of Matthew himself. The Gospel of Luke assumed its present shape by combining parts of Mark with parts of other documents. The substance of the first three gospels belongs to the period just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. All scholars admit that in the fourth gospel the life and words of Jesus are

much colored by the reflections and personality of the author. The great body of conservative critics places the book at the end of the first century. The more radical and smaller school dates all of the gospels so late as to give them trifling historical value.

The chief sources of our knowledge of the faith of the early church regarding Jesus and the meaning of his work consist: (1) in the great epistles of Paul, which antedate our earliest gospel — Galatians being written about the year 57, First and Second Corinthians in the same year, Romans issuing a year later; (2) the material upon which our present gospels are constructed, which came from those whom Luke describes as “eye-witnesses and ministers of the word”; and (3) our gospels in the present form, which represent the faith of the church in the generation succeeding the death of the apostles. That faith has also received noble symbolic expression in the Book of Revelation, written to sustain the sinking courage of the church at the time she was suffering persecution under Domitian, about the year 93. The dates of the various books is a ques-

tion to be debated in a classroom, and does not belong to a popular discourse. It is sufficient to say that new light on the structure of the New Testament brings out more clearly the strong, wonderful outlines of our Lord's character, and reveals the growing experience of the church in his power as Saviour.

IV

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

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There was a time, known as the Golden Age of Freethought, from about 1865 to 1925, when it was thought that the Higher Religions -- Rationalism, Secularism, Deism, Atheism and other “thinking” religions (as opposed to the lower “believing” religions) would be the main religious force in Western Civilization within 50 years. The failure of this great upward religious movement was no fault of the new and elevating religious ideas; these new progressive religious ideals were forcefully suppressed by the political power of the old beliefs.

During this period of rapid intellectual progress there was a large number of Scholarly Scientific, Historical and Liberal Religious works published, many of these old works have disappeared or became extremely scarce. The Bank of Wisdom is looking for these old works to republish in electronic format for preservation and distribution of this information; if you have such old, needed and scarce works please contact the Bank of Wisdom.

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IV

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

OUR theme this evening is the person of Jesus Christ. We shall not attempt the ambitious task of proving his divinity, but shall seek rather to indicate the modern method of approach to the mystery of his nature, and to interpret if possible the new light which, hidden from our fathers, shines upon us in the face of the Master. We tread a path back to him such as has been trodden by no previous generation, and the new approach discovers hitherto unknown features in him who is the central figure of the world. If you have walked along the shore at night when the moon was hanging low in the horizon over the sea, you have noticed that a pathway of shimmering silvery light led from you across the intervening waters to the Queen of the Night. As you proceed, the trail of light changes with your advance. Waves that a few moments before were bathed in splendor are now lost in gloom.

Before and behind there is darkness, but ever between you and the glory that is in the sky stretches the bridge of light. This experience images the relation of Christ to his church. Men of the first century looked upon the Light of the World, and between their needs and him there gleamed a shining way. Men of the twelfth century gazed upon him from a very different angle. The way that had been glorious and clear to the believers of the first century was in utter darkness to the Christians of the Middle Ages, but, lo, a silvery path led from him to their feet. The Christian of the twentieth century does not stand upon the spot where the fathers stood. He contemplates the Master from a fresh point of vision. Where his fathers saw light, to him there is darkness. He does not come to the lordship of Jesus along the way of the miraculous conception, the testimony of the angels and shepherds, the wonderful works of healing, or the proofs of the resurrection. That approach is shadowy, but he has his own clear path back to the Master, and it is not less glorious than that which rejoiced the former generations.

It was stated in the first lecture that whatever new light has come to us regarding spiritual realities has shone either through our better comprehension of God's methods of creating and sustaining nature and humanity, or through our deeper insight into man himself. Evolution and Personality are the master words in modern thinking. It was also noted that the new theology may be divided into two schools: one approaching religious themes along the leadings of the evolutionary hypothesis, the other emphasizing personality. Upon both of these highways we shall walk this evening.

I

The New Approach through Evolution

The Christian evolutionist begins with the assumption that God's method in nature and history is progressive. The divine revelation, therefore, must be progressive, for the Infinite can make himself known in the finite only by successive disclosures. Such an ever enlarging manifestation of the nature and purpose of the Creator there has been. First came the whirling star dust, then the habitable world,

then the earth green with vegetable life and teeming with living creatures. Finally man appeared, the highest form of life upon the planet, and the culmination of an æonian process. In each advancing step of creation more of the power and wisdom of God shone through his works. With the advent of man physical evolution seems to have ceased. Progress since his coming has been largely human progress. Man's improvement has not been chiefly physical, but intellectual and spiritual. He has developed as a person, increasing in his perception of truth and becoming more responsive to the subtle pleadings of obligation. He has risen superior to the world of instinct and entered a higher sphere where reason persuades. He has exchanged the sovereignty of impulse for the commands of conscience. In this higher stratum in which his mind lives the authority of force gives place to the authority of love, and animal satisfactions become subordinate to spiritual ideals and quenchless aspirations. Man has passed the limits of the physical and has been born into the loftier world of the spiritual. Physically he is the last and finest

product of ages of material development; spiritually he is a child in that vast world of freedom, joy, love, righteousness into which he has been ushered. It is not incredible, therefore, that, having begun in this new realm of the spiritual, he should grow up into the fullness of his stature.

“So in man’s self arise

August anticipations, symbols, types

Of a dim splendor ever on before

In that eternal circle life pursues.”

It is believable that the house having been completed, the children born into the house will grow up into manhood and womanhood, and will learn obedience to the father and the art of living together.

Or, to state the thought in another form: God, having begun a disclosure of himself, first through nature and then through the constitution and history of man, will continue his self-manifestation until all the fullness of his being that can be revealed in human conditions is made known. This perfected humanity is the kingdom of God. It is a universal incarnation of God in mankind. This divine hu-

manity is clearly promised in the Scriptures and has been the dream of prophetic minds. Christianity furthermore teaches that to bring about this universal incarnation, God has incarnated himself in an individual. It declares that the Spirit of God, who moved upon the waters of primeval chaos, and who has revealed himself as spiritual light in every rational soul, took full possession of one being, who was so pure that through him shone the glory of the Godhead, and so righteous that in him the divine will was fulfilled.

It is sometimes claimed that the complete man should come at the end and not in the midst of the process. But it is perfectly scientific that a single type should first appear as the pattern and head of the humanity to be produced. A vine-dresser in Concord, wishing to produce a sweeter and more luscious grape than any which grew in New England, made some twenty-two hundred experiments. Finally he crossed the wild grape with the Isabella, and was rewarded by a grape of such value that it has become permanent in our markets. Other men, wishing to have this new

variety in their vineyards, were not so foolish as to repeat Mr. Bull's experiments, hoping to reach the same result. On the contrary, they possessed themselves of a cutting from the original vine, whose life was thus perpetuated and multiplied until the Concord grape is upon all our tables. It is by the production and perpetuation of superior varieties that the vegetable and animal kingdoms are improved. By this same method is a new humanity being created and made dominant. A man appears unusual in excellence, a Moses, a Plato, a Confucius. Others emulate his virtues, but not afar off and apart from him. They draw near with open minds to receive light and power. The spiritual energy of the teacher reproduces his character in his disciples. They are conformed to his likeness, and the world is enriched with a new order of men. By this method Christianity expects to cover the earth with new creatures. In the fullness of time is born the typical spiritual man, a variant from the prevailing type. About him gather those who feel the spell of his greatness. They do more than imitate him. They put on his char-

acter; they receive his spiritual energy; they are engrafted into his being, and are transformed into his image. Thus an original and distinct type of man is produced, a new humanity of which this archetypal man is the head.

But in what sense do we call Jesus the perfect man? There is no evidence that he was the ideal of physical beauty. Neither have we reason to assert that his mind was stored with the learning of the world and that he was complete in every mental faculty and grace. We hold that he was perfect as a son of the Father, and perfect as a leader of other men into sonship. There was no flaw in his attitude towards God and man. No fault was in his spirit. He was complete in all those moods and dispositions of mind which are acceptable to God, and out of which naturally flow those activities and refinements which perfect human character. "Nature through all time," says Le Conte, "struggled ever upwards until it attained life in organisms. The organic kingdom then struggled upwards until it attained rational life in man. So humanity struggled upwards until it attained divine life in Christ."

Or, to state the truth in another form, the life of God which is partially revealed in nature, and which burns in some degree as spiritual fire in every human soul, flamed forth at last in all the glory that can shine through an individual. This typical man conquers the world by reproducing his character in a type of men who shall inherit the earth.

If Jesus is highest in holiness and spiritual elevation among men, it is certainly rational to speak of him as "God manifest in the flesh." As we know the Creator only through his works, we shall receive our clearest insight through his master-piece. The material universe declares something of the power and wisdom of its Maker; but the spirit of man interprets, comprehends, dominates the world of matter. The moral personality of man is a loftier symbol than the physical world through which to understand the Deity. There is nothing which has so much of God in it as the spirit of man. The spirit of man at its best is necessarily God's clearest manifestation of himself. No one of us will dispute the statement that humanity is at its best in the

spirit of Jesus Christ. Through him we get our most unclouded insight into the divine character. He who is highest in humanity is our guide, interpreter, and lord, for we must love and obey the highest when we see it. Being the highest in humanity, he must be the supreme revelation of God in the flesh.

Following this line of reasoning, how unsatisfactory it is to speak of the Eternal as "Force," or as "Infinite Energy"! These are terms drawn from inanimate creation. Spirit is the more comprehensive word. It is a nobler and more significant word, and of spirit, through our own consciousness, we have a more intimate knowledge than of force. When we call God a spirit, we are applying to the Incomprehensible One our most exalted symbol. He is more than force; he is not less than spirit. When we have interpreted him through the purest, holiest personality in history, we have employed our best to think of the Highest. Into the infinite depths we have looked with our clearest lens, and the light which reaches us through that flawless medium cannot be ignored or denied.

But while we acknowledge Jesus to be the head of humanity and his spirit to be our loftiest symbol of the divine, we are less anxious than were our fathers to prove his separateness from humanity. We certainly refuse to debate concerning the same substance or like substance. We realize that we do not know the substance of a blade of grass, much less do we pretend to distinguish between the substance of spiritual beings. We find that nature is loath to draw hard-and-fast lines. The mineral kingdom shades into the vegetable, the vegetable into the animal. There is a wider difference between the brain of a Shakespeare and the brain of a Hottentot than between the cerebral development of the lowest savage and that of an ourang-outang. What we fail to do in the natural world cannot with certainty be performed in the spiritual.

“Draw if thou canst the mystic line
Severing rightly his from thine, —
Which is human, which divine ?”

All we can affirm with assurance is that difference in degree makes ultimately a difference in kind. Christ as the head of a new hu-

manity is in another order from that lower kingdom whose headship was in Adam. He is the first born among many brethren. He is humanity realized, and God revealed in human condition.

II

The Uniqueness of the Personality of Jesus.

Let us turn from a consideration of the unique place which Jesus holds in the evolution of the race to contemplate the mystery of his personality. The mood in which most men to-day study his life is very different from the characteristic mood of a few generations ago. Our fathers were attracted by the supernatural portents attending his birth; they were amazed at his sovereign power over nature and demons; they believed that the resurrection of Lazarus, and his own physical ascension, proclaimed him Lord of life and of death. To this generation the miraculous is not a help to faith, but is rather a hindrance. It adds to our problems by making us question the credibility of the records. We believe in the mighty works of Jesus because we believe in him. Such a tremendous personality must have had

extraordinary and beneficent power over the infirm. Yet few acknowledge his spiritual preëminence through the wonder of his miracles. Jesus himself appears to have wished the evidences of his authority to rest upon other grounds than the mighty works. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Without raising the question of his miraculous power, we ask, What was there in the person of Jesus which compels us to bow before him and acknowledge him as Lord and Master? We cannot completely answer this question, for criticism has no spectrum to separate the colors composing the Light of the World. But there are some truthful affirmations to be made, which help us to comprehend the uniqueness of Jesus.

Note first the phenomenal clearness and permanency of his consciousness of God's presence and character.

We have reason to believe that while animals are conscious they are not self-conscious. In man we find a sense of selfhood, a feeling

of freedom and of moral responsibility, which give him a realization of his individuality. Mingling with this perception of selfhood there is in most men a perception of God. A multitude can say with Webster that the greatest thought which enters their minds is the thought of their personal responsibility to Almighty God. To the saints there come luminous moments when their minds are pervaded with a sense of the reality of the spiritual world. God becomes more real to them than the sensuous world. He is exceedingly sweet and precious unto them. They perceive his goodness enfolding all things. All the leaves of their experience are bound together in one volume of love. An elevated joy surges through their being. To the spiritually gifted these hours of exalted feeling and of penetrating insight are not rare. In such a mood Isaiah saw the world filled with God's glory, and Whittier wrote "The Eternal Goodness."

And even to minds that are not distinctively religious these intuitions are granted in moments when the fountains of the great deep are broken up. St. Gaudens, writing in the

midst of his grief over his friend Bion's death, said: "We know nothing, but a deep conviction came over me like a flash that at the bottom of it all, whatever it is, the Mystery must be beneficent. It does not seem as if the bottom of all were something malevolent, and the thought was a great comfort." Mr. E. L. Godkin, the late editor of the "Nation," had little of the mystic in his nature, yet in the time of sorrow the vision splendid was not withheld from him. "I know," he wrote, "that things happen for the best, and that our lives are ordered by a beneficent hand. When my little darling left her father's house for the last time on Friday, I felt assured that somewhere a wiser and better father awaited her, and that in his hands she would one day become all, more than all, that I rashly and fondly hoped to see her in mine."

This sense of the reality and goodness of God, which comes to most men in the profound experiences of joy or sorrow, and which comes to the supreme prophetic spirits in larger measure and at more frequent intervals, was to Jesus a permanent possession. The presence

of God was as real to him as were the mountains round about Jerusalem. He lived and moved and had his being in a vivid realization of the Divine Fatherhood. His vision of the Eternal Goodness was not an intuition born of an exalted mood; it was a clear and steady spiritual perception. He did not, like others, mount into this sphere of knowledge in golden moments, only to sink back to a lower level of thought and feeling. In this lofty zone he dwelt habitually. God-consciousness apparently marks as distinct an advance over self-consciousness as self-consciousness rises above mere animal-consciousness. Dr. R. M. Bucke, describing what he calls cosmic consciousness, but which I prefer to call God-consciousness, writes: "Cosmic consciousness in its more striking instances is not simply an expansion or extension of the self-conscious mind with which we are familiar, but the superaddition of a function as distinct from any possessed by the average man as self-consciousness is distinct from any function possessed by the higher animals. . . . The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos, that is,

of the life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence — would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking and more important than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already." This superadded consciousness of the order and beneficence of the cosmos, which has come in rapt moments of vision to many minds, was in Jesus a sovereign and habitual consciousness. Purified from every element of hysteria, it was in him a sane, healthy, unclouded conviction of spiritual reality.

Moreover, this Divine Reality which he beheld in abiding vision was not merely an encompassing presence, or the moral governor

of the universe. To Jesus, God was ever the Father. Not the depth of God's wisdom or the vastness of his power, but his inexhaustible solicitude was constantly in Jesus' thought. This was not because our Lord was exempt from hardship, and enjoyed exceptional favors. He was an hungered, weary, and depressed, yet he trusted in the Father's care. In those last dark hours which tested his soul to the uttermost his faith failed not. Even in the treachery of Judas, the malignity of the priests, the ingratitude of the multitude, he saw the Father's hand holding the cup to his lips. He felt to the full the enormity of the power of the world's sin, his own spiritual isolation, the adamant hardness of the nation's heart, the frailty of his disciples, the seemingly overwhelming defeat which had met his efforts to establish the kingdom; yet in the very hour of apparently irretrievable disaster he instituted a memorial to celebrate his victory. It was as though Napoleon amid the rout of Waterloo had requested his staff to rear on that field a monument to his triumph over the allied nations. In the blackest moment of his

tragedy Jesus delivered his spirit into the Father's hand. His knowledge of God was so comprehensive and intimate, so superior to that of the greatest of the prophets, that he declared: "No one knoweth who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

Allied to this sense of the divine fatherhood, and growing out of it, was the realization of his own sonship. Jesus conceived himself to be living a life of implicit trust and perfect obedience. He knew the Father's will and did always the things which pleased him. He lived the life of a true son. He was conscious of a life of perfect spiritual union with God. This conviction of sonship gave him his victory over Satan in the wilderness, and sustained him in Gethsemane and on the cross.

The present generation of Christian thinkers is the first since apostolic days which has asserted that Jesus is the Son of God on ethical in preference to metaphysical grounds. It is maintained that by the clearness of his knowledge, and the perfectness of his obedience, Jesus achieved and demonstrated a spirit-

ual union with God which was that of a perfect son to the Father. He believed himself to be identified with God in will and affection ; and his unflinching purpose for his disciples was that they should love as God loves, pity as God pities, forgive as God forgives, and serve as God serves, so that they too should be the sons of the Highest. It was this unbroken conformity of purpose and feeling with the nature and will of the perfect Father in heaven that the disciples beheld in Jesus, and the perception confirmed their faith in him and his mission. Because of this obedience they believed that God had highly exalted him and given him a name above every name. We know too little about what is deepest in man, and what is deepest in the universe, to talk wisely of the likeness of substance of the soul of Jesus with the substance of the Spirit of God, and his unlikeness to the substance of the spirit which is in man. We are on much surer ground when we shift from the metaphysical sonship which our fathers affirmed so dogmatically to an ethical union, as of father and son, subsisting between God and Jesus, a relation-

ship sustained by abundant evidence. This is much safer than to talk in learned ignorance of the consubstantiality of Christ's nature with that of God. A complete spiritual union indicates an ontological oneness. We can see the former, but cannot prove the latter. Yet that God was in Christ is the corner stone of faith to-day, as it has been in all the Christian centuries. We believe that the mind correctly reasons when it concludes that the light which was in him could have come only from the Eternal Fountain. We believe that the true deduction to be drawn from such a character as his is that he was Light of Light; the fulness of God, living in human conditions.

The approach to Christ's nature and place in the spiritual economy through the contemplation of his unshadowed fellowship with the Father is a surer way than the commoner method of arguing his divinity by affirming his sinlessness. When one undertakes to prove such a negative as sinlessness the task is enormous. The data are lacking. There are thirty silent years. Of the period of his public ministry only a few incidents have come down to

us. Christ himself has nowhere unequivocally asserted his absolute perfectness in every thought and word and deed. His impenitence is indeed most anomalous. It is contrary to the experience of all the saints. The more commanding and intimate the sense of a holy God the more keenly does the pure soul realize its unworthiness. Yet from the lips of the one who dwelt most constantly in the ineffable glory of the divine presence there escapes no cry of repentance, no petition for forgiveness. This certainly is unique in the records of holiness. But our philosophy does not compass all the depths of personality. It may be that the very majesty of the sense of divine love and triumph, which was peculiar to Jesus, swallowed up regret for any momentary aberration which might have occurred in moments of childish immaturity, or of physical exhaustion. We cannot prove that every deed of his throughout his whole earthly career was plumb with the straight line of duty, or that no rebellious thought was for a single moment cherished. It is hard to demonstrate that, in that eternal circle life pursues, he did not swerve for a

single instant from the centre. Our inference from his impenitence may simply indicate our ignorance of the workings of a mind that reposed perfectly in a knowledge of God's fatherly love. Christ's sinlessness may be a fact, but the assertion is an inference from insufficient data, and the issue is too momentous to rest upon an unstable deduction. We are on different ground, however, when we maintain that, whenever we get a glimpse into Christ's inmost soul, we find an abiding consciousness that he is living a life of trust and obedience, living as a son should live amid the bewilderments and temptations of the world.

To live the life of a son in the Father's world, and under the conditions which the Father appoints, this is the perfect life. A life of complete trust and steady obedience, which pours itself out to the uttermost in loving service, cannot be surpassed in the sphere of religion. Beyond this there is nothing higher or more divine:

Jesus had a unique sense of mission. Others have believed that they had a divine call to a specific task. The prophets felt that the bur-

den of the Lord was upon them. Paul sought to apprehend that for which he had been apprehended. Bismarck was convinced that he was raised up for the unification of Germany. But the sense of mission in Jesus was different from the call of others. He felt that he stood in a relationship to God into which no other had been called, and upon him there rested a weight which had burdened no other shoulders. He was the Messiah. He fulfilled in himself the righteousness after which the holy ones in Israel had yearned. Moreover that righteousness he could communicate. He could save others by an impartation of himself. He came to found a kingdom. He was arrested upon the charge of claiming the title of king, and the accusation he did not disavow. Upon this charge he was convicted and sentenced, and over the cross to explain and vindicate his act, Pilate wrote: "The King of the Jews." Some one has well said, "Jesus did not die for a metaphor." He was persuaded that his mission was to establish a kingdom. But how marvelous was his conception of this kingdom! It was to be world-wide in extent. Its monarch,

unlike other founders of empires, would not be the head of a long dynasty of kings, but in his own person would reign forever and ever. Not only would he be supreme in authority and power, but every subject would be conformed to the character of the king. Not only would he be sovereign over the conduct of men, but his personal influence would lead captive every thought and bring into obedience every emotion. So conscious was Jesus of absolute sovereignty under God that he would brook no compromise. If the sacred books contradicted his teachings, he abrogated them. He demanded unconditional surrender. "Leave all," he said, "and follow me!" "Whoso loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me!" To reject him was doom and outer darkness. To receive and obey him was to enter into life eternal. President King has well said: "Jesus has such God-consciousness and such sense of mission as would topple any other brain into insanity, but only keeps him sweet, normal, rational. . . . In the very act of the most stupendous self-assertion, he can still declare himself to be preëminently the meek and

lowly one, and can carry our conviction both of his meekness and of his power to give rest to all. For my own part, I cannot see that the world offers anywhere a comparable phenomenon."

III

Jesus meets our Religious Needs

We have approached the person of Christ along the road of the evolutionary hypothesis, and have affirmed that it is reasonable to believe that God, having begun to reveal himself, imperfectly in nature and more perfectly in man, would complete his work and manifest himself in perfected humanity. Jesus is the type and the creator of the sons of God. As the supreme personality he is God's clearest voice to men. He is the disclosure of what man can be, and of what God is in character and purpose. We have also studied Christ's own consciousness of himself and have obtained some glimpses of its uniqueness. Another avenue of approach is through our own personalities. We validate his mission by recognizing his ability to satisfy our profoundest spiritual needs.

Man is a thinker. He finds himself in a mysterious and often terrible universe. He receives cruel blows and drinks deep of the cup of bitter disappointment. In passion and often in despair he flings his challenge into the darkness. What is the meaning of life? What is the nature of that Reality which at one moment fondles him and in another breaks him down? What is the goal of life? What is the significance of sorrow? Whither lead the gates of death? One can endure any severity of discipline, if only he has a reasonable explanation of its significance. These words of Chesterton win my hearty assent: "There are some people — and I am one of them — who think that the most important thing about a man is still his view of the universe. We think that for a landlady considering a lodger it is important to know his income, but still more important to know his philosophy. We think that for a general about to fight it is important to know the enemy's numbers, but still more important to know the enemy's philosophy. We think the question is not whether the theory of the cosmos affects matters, but

whether in the long run anything else affects them." What a man really believes about himself and his destiny, and the nature of the forces which work upon him, is of the utmost moment. To man, the thinker, Jesus has given an interpretation of the nature of God, the dignity of humanity, the meaning of pain, which carries conviction because it is the most rational that can be given, meeting all the profoundest necessities of our beings. He puts the puzzle of life together so that it makes sense. Therefore we believe his insight to be true.

Man is a living will. He energizes towards ends which he conceives to be worthy. Jesus meets man, the toiler, with the noblest object of endeavor which can possibly be presented to the human will. Seek ye first the sovereignty of God in your own lives, and in the lives of others, and all needful things shall be added unto you. No more inclusive, exalted, and satisfying goal could be offered than this. It awakens all the latent chivalry of the spirit.

Man has a heart. He feels his dependence upon a Power greater than himself; he is conscious of coming far short of his ideals; he suffers un-

der a sense of defeat in his spiritual warfare. He needs a Comforter, a Redeemer; One whose love will not let him go; One who will forgive his sins and help him toward righteousness.

Henry Ward Beecher has expressed in words which will become classic his finding of God and the meaning of life through Christ: "I know not what the tablets of eternity have written down, but I think, when I stand in Zion and before God, the brightest thing which I shall look back upon will be the blessed morning in May when it pleased God to reveal to my wandering soul the idea that it was his nature to love a man in his sins for the sake of helping him out of them; that he did not do it out of compliment to Christ, or to a law, or a plan of salvation, but from the fullness of his great heart; that he was not a being made mad by sin, but sorry; that he was not furious with wrath towards the sinner, but pitied him. . . . And when I found that Jesus had such a disposition, and that when his disciples did wrong, he drew them closer to him than he did before; and when pride and jealousy and rivalry and all vulgar and worldly feelings

rankled in their bosoms, he opened his heart to them as medicine to heal their infirmities; when I found that it was Christ's nature to lift men out of weakness to strength, out of impurity to goodness, out of everything low and debasing to superiority, I felt that I had found a God. I shall never forget the feelings with which I walked forth that May morning. The golden pavements will never feel to my feet as then the grass felt to them; and the singing of the birds in the woods — for I roamed in the woods — was cacophonous to the sweet music of my thoughts; and there were no forms in the universe which seemed to me graceful enough to represent the Being, a conception of whose character had just dawned upon my mind. I felt when I had, with the Psalmist, called upon the heavens, the earth, the mountains, the streams, the floods, the birds, the beasts, and universal being, to praise God, that I called upon nothing that could praise him enough for the revelation of such a nature as that in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Multitudes have accepted Christ as the revelation of God because in his deeds of service

and his spirit of grace they behold the God after whom their hearts yearn. They make the words of Arthur Hallam their own: "I like Christianity because it fits into all the folds of one's nature."

Jesus not only interprets God, he brings God near. There went out from him an influence that made men think of the eternal. In him there was a glory that lifted men's thoughts to a light that is not upon sea or land. If we hold a diamond in the sun, its fire and beauty impress us with the worth of the jewel. If instead of a diamond, we use a crystal prism, the wonderful colors revealed cause us to exclaim on the glories of the light rather than the beauty of the glass. Moses, Plato, Shakespeare amaze us with the depths and brilliancy of humanity; but the flawless purity of Jesus' soul carries our thoughts immediately beyond itself to the Light which shone through it. He surrounded the men who accompanied him with the atmosphere of the eternal world. "We beheld his glory," said the Apostle, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "We behold the light of the glory

of God in the face of Jesus Christ," writes Paul out of his own spiritual experience. The King of Glory will come into the life of the individual and into the courses of history, if the gates of truth lift up their heads to admit him. A mental image held vividly in the mind releases the latent energies of the will and quickens the flow of the emotions. Truth firmly grasped by the understanding fills the willing heart with the spirit of truth. The vision splendid sends redeeming power into the soul. When the disciples beheld the glory of God in the face of Jesus, the spirit and power of God came upon them. They were baptized with the spirit of the truth which their wondering minds had apprehended. New power always is released among men by new knowledge, whether that knowledge be of electricity, or of God. God has been in the hearts of men from the creation, but only when the persuasions of his love and the mercy of his righteousness were manifested in Christ did his strength work more abundantly, and a new era dawn upon the earth. Jesus augmented the power of the immanent God by revealing him, and with the

new vision there came the added might of the Spirit of Truth. Thus Christianity has been the most revolutionary force which has made for righteousness, peace, and goodness.

Moreover, the religion which sprang from the activity of Jesus will do for the faithful all that religion can be expected to do. We often lay upon our faith too heavy a burden. We seem to think that because we are Christians we should be immune from trouble, and should be prosperous and happy. We are apt seriously to question the reality of our spiritual convictions when the battle goes against us. Religion like all the finer influences has its limitations. Music will comfort and inspire men, but it will not plough their fields. Literature will afford pleasure and instruction, but it will not propel a locomotive. Religion does not add a cubit to our stature, or extra talents to our minds. It does not put necessarily a dollar in our pockets, nor save us from misfortune. Its office is distinct and circumscribed. It interprets the meaning of life. It creates ideals and elevates standards. It declares and strengthens the highest motives. It brings men into those

moods and dispositions in which the mental faculties work at their best. It gives mysterious strength to the will and dauntless courage to the heart. It saves men from the guilt and power of sin. It deals directly with the inner life and only indirectly with conditions. Jesus will do for the soul that comes within the circle of his splendor and power all that can be legitimately required of religion. He proves his divinity by lifting men into the divine.

In conclusion, let me beg of you not to make him a problem. Do not let the mystery of his person become one more vexing question in your spiritual life. He is not another problem, but the solution of problems. Consider him not as a mystery, but as a key to the profoundest mysteries. He solves more problems than he raises. He is not the puzzle of the world, but the Light of the World. Whoso follows him shall not walk in darkness, but has the light of life.

“I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.”

V

GOD AND SALVATION

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V

GOD AND SALVATION

HAS the modern mind in all its searchings throughout the universe formed a new conception of God? Has it formulated novel arguments for his existence? Has any new light streamed upon us from nature and the personal spirit of man — those two windows by which humanity looks out into the infinite?

I

The Nobler Symbols of God

We may safely affirm that modern science has furnished us with nobler symbols of the wisdom and majesty of the Creator than was known to men of other days. Their snug little universe, fashioned six thousand years ago by a fiat of the Almighty, has been enlarged by measureless diameters. If the Psalmist could exclaim, "For the Lord is a great God!" how much more can we, who have received the mar-

velous revelations of the telescope and the microscope! Our thought is lost in the immensities above and below us. No generation has been granted such symbols of the greatness of God. While the scientists have enlarged our vision of the wisdom and the vastness of the Creator, New Testament scholars have called our attention to the preëminence which Jesus gave to the fatherhood of God. This new perception has caused men of to-day to replace the dread God of Calvinism with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The modern Christian attempts to weave the thought of the divine fatherhood into the conception of the infinite and eternal reality revealed to us by science. In fusing these two visions we find a God whom we can both love and adore.

II

New Conceptions of God

The Puritans thought of God as the dread sovereign who ruled the affairs of men from his awful throne. To-day we are more inclined to think of him as an animating and omnipre-

sent Spirit, dwelling in his world as the human soul lives in our bodies. In thus emphasizing the immanence of God we are returning to the convictions of the third and fourth centuries when the church was pervaded by Greek philosophy. From the fifth to the nineteenth centuries Christianity has been largely under the dominance of Roman methods of thought, and has apprehended God as a greater Cæsar governing the world from above the stars. The revived emphasis on the indwelling God has modified inevitably many doctrines of the church. It has obliterated the distinction between the sacred and the profane. To us every fragment of life seems like the piece of cloth which David held up before the astonished eyes of Saul at Engedi—a part of the king's robe. The pagan religions are not considered to be the work of demons, but are studied that we may learn the many ways by which the Divine Spirit searches for all the children of God.

In this strong new emphasis upon the immanence of the Deity lurks the menace of pantheism. Freedom of the will with its ad-

venture and risk, its heaven and hell, often seems to be submerged in the ordinary courses of nature. Sin is frequently shorn of its horror, being appraised as "good in the making," "truth partially understood," "a mistaken search for God," "the absence of light."

When we seek to learn the prevailing idea of the transcendent God, we find a distinct line of demarcation separating our intellectual leaders. They differ in their starting-points. One group of thinkers begins with the sublime postulate of a perfect God. From him nothing can be taken and to him nothing can be added. He is perfect as a circle is perfect. Full-orbed in joy and power and wisdom, he lives in the timeless, spaceless world, holding all things present in his thought. What seems to us imperfect is made perfect in him. The chief end of man is so to purify his soul by the divine grace that he may look into the undimmed glory of the Eternal, and lift a song of everlasting praise for the wonder of the Everlasting Love. The perfect God may be enjoyed, praised, and loved, but to augment his fullness is impossible.

The other group begins with man. They are somewhat afraid of metaphysical speculations, and are more anxious to know what humanity is, and what it has learned. Generally they prefer psychology to philosophy. They have a profound reverence for what the spirit in man reports. They believe that the affirmations of the spirit are that freedom is real; life is a venture and its risks are genuine; evil is a rugged fact; there is something in this universe that is brutal and devilish; being contrary to the will of God, it must be overcome, and the battle challenges human heroism and divine sacrifice. They declare that truth is to be learned by experience. What works well in the long run is true. They refuse to let their minds wander far from the consciousness and the experience of men. They find that God as he has been revealed in the process of an evolving universe is a battling, patient, conquering God. Limited and constrained he appears to be within his own creation. Thwarted apparently at a million points, he divines fresh ways of advance. Like a general assaulting impregnable works, he is often baffled by the fortunes of

war, but the campaign goes on. Through the ages one increasing purpose runs, the plan is unfolding, the fight is real, and the garments of the conqueror are dyed in blood.

A multiplying number of men believe that the God we know in experience is a militant God. Every dedicated soul is conscious that the conflict, in which he is enlisted, between right and wrong is not a sham fight. Real issues both for himself and God depend upon his fidelity. The values are of such worth that he must sacrifice all things, even life itself, to win them. If he is faithless, he does not feel merely that he has lost something. He has been untrue to God. He has betrayed a Cause. He has quenched the Spirit. The Deity is conceived as carrying on through the ages a task of supreme moment, and the activities of men either help or hinder him.

There is a tendency to question whether God can predict the movements which man in his freedom will make. The directions and plans of the campaign are conditioned by the fidelity and competence of men. They may elect to go before the king and make straight

in the desert a royal highway, or they may make the path circuitous and difficult. They may smooth the road of redemptive grace, or they may compel the Redeemer to toil up Calvary, bearing a cross. The methods of God change with the volitions of humanity. Professor James uses the illustration of a skilled chess-player engaged in a game with a novice. The expert cannot tell every move which the beginner will make. His plan is contingent upon the play of his opponent, yet he is sure to win. His fore-knowledge is of the result rather than of each particular action. God knows the end from the beginning, but man has a vital part in the game.

Freedom in a true sense makes man a creator. He can do more than discover truth and rejoice in it. He makes it. He is able to fashion beauty where there was ugliness. He causes light to shine in darkness. He extends the domain of justice. He builds up a kingdom of righteousness. He adds his own original contribution to the temple of God. Thus he augments the power of the Almighty. He increases the available righteousness in the uni-

verse. He swells the aggregate of its goodness. Such a militant idea of the import of life promotes efficiency and courage — the two characteristic virtues of our time. McAndrew, in Kipling's famous poem, thinks of the divine government under the figure of an immense stationary engine,

“ Enormous, certain, slow,” —

each part exactly fitted to its place, everything foreseen and provided for, working perpetually, yet neither enlarged nor diminished by its ceaseless toil. That Calvinistic idea of God is repudiated by a growing number of people. To them the universe is still in the making. The Eternal is really accomplishing something in time. His goodness is to be known in his achievements. His character is to be seen in his activities rather than contemplated in his timeless attributes. He is to be called good, not because logically all perfections are in him, but because his good-will is displayed in a struggling world.

However defective this view may be considered as a final philosophy, it is a tremen-

dous stimulus to activity. Our saints to-day are not cloistered contemplatives ; they are soldiers adding to the glory and power of God by bravery in his wars. They believe that in the moral energy of a righteous man the Supreme Will experiences an increment of strength.

In philosophy these two schools are broadly distinguished as Absolutists and Pragmatists, or as Monists and Pluralists. One contemplates God's completeness, the other his struggle. The main body of believers belongs to neither extreme, but, accepting Robertson's well-known dictum that "truth is made up of opposite propositions, and is not found in the *via media* between the two," they work under the inspiration which comes abundantly from each group of thinkers, quite content not to solve the paradoxes of truth.

III

New Reasons for Faith

The materialistic interpretation of nature, so ably defended a century ago, is a waning philosophy. "The idea," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "that the world as we know it arose

by chance and fortuitous concourse of atoms is one that no science really sustains, though such an idea is the superficial outcome of an incipient recognition of the uniformity of nature." The following charming anecdote of Kepler shows the instinctive revolt of the mind which laughs this hypothesis out of court. "Yesterday, when weary with writing, and my mind quite dusty with considering these atoms, I was called to supper, and a salad I had asked for was set before me. It seems, then, I said aloud, that if pewter dishes, leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of egg had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that there would come out a salad. Yes, says my wife, but not so nice and well dressed a salad as this of mine is!"

Matter when closely studied fades away into vortices of energy, and the energy everywhere works in such a purposeful manner that one, constitutionally inclined to faith, finds it easy to believe that the immanent Reason and Purpose is not less free, righteous,

and consciously intelligent than the highest of his creatures.

The doctrine of evolution has given us an argument for the existence of God which to my mind is of convincing weight. Mr. Fiske states it in his little volume entitled "Through Nature to God." "One of the greatest contributions ever made to science," he declares, "is Herbert Spencer's profound and luminous exposition of life as the continuous adjustment of inner to outer relations. . . . If you come upon a dog lying by the roadside and are in doubt whether he is alive or dead, you poke him with a stick; if you get no response, you presently conclude that it is a dead dog. . . . The growth of a plant is in its ultimate analysis a group of motions put forth in adjustment to a group of physical conditions in the soil and atmosphere. . . . All life upon the globe, whether physical or psychical, represents the continuous adjustment of inner to outer relations. The degree of life is low or high according as the correspondence between the internal and the external relations is simple or complex, limited or extensive, partial or complete." The

lowest form of life reacts only upon the grosser impacts which come from its immediate neighborhood, but a higher form, like a keen-eyed vulture, relates itself to the far distant. Embryology has given us the wonderful fact that sight and hearing were slowly differentiated from the sense of touch. Light shining upon some exceptionally sensitive dermal sac gradually developed the organ of vision, and the living creature acquired the power to adapt itself to distant objects. "The ear was formed in response to the outward existence of acoustic vibrations, the mother's love came in answer to the infant's need, fidelity and honor were slowly developed as the nascent social life required them. Everywhere the internal adjustment was brought about so as to harmonize with some actually existing external fact. Such has been nature's method, such is the deepest law of life that science has been able to detect. At that critical moment in the history of our planet, when love was beginning to play a part hitherto unknown, and notions of right and wrong were germinating in the nascent human soul, we see it vaguely reaching forth to some-

thing akin to itself, not in the realm of fleeting phenomena, but in the Eternal Presence beyond. An internal adjustment of ideas was achieved in correspondence with an Unseen World. That the ideas were crude and child-like is what might be expected. The cardinal fact is that the crude childlike mind was groping to put itself into relation with an ethical world not visible to the senses. Religion thus ushered upon the scene coeval with the birth of humanity has been the largest and most ubiquitous fact connected with the existence of mankind upon the earth. Now, if the relation thus established in the morning twilight of man's existence between the human soul and a world invisible and immaterial is a relation of which only the subjective term is real and the objective term is non-existent, then, I say, it is something utterly without precedent in the whole history of creation. Of all the implications of the doctrine of evolution with regard to man, I believe the very deepest and strongest to be that which asserts the Everlasting Reality of Religion." In a word, as the eye is the response of man to the light, the

ear his reaction upon acoustic vibrations, so his sense of God and of a supreme moral universe is the answer of his soul to an existing reality. May we not complete Mr. Fiske's argument and believe that as the light has developed the perfected eye of the body, so God, whose brooding over the human spirit has produced the response we call faith, will increasingly perfect that response until faith becomes spiritual intuition, and the sublime prediction of the prophets be fulfilled in a redeemed humanity that shall see God face to face, and know even as also it is known.

The knowledge that religion is the universal response of the human soul to the Unseen Presence makes the modern man disinclined to consider his faith as resting upon anything so unsubstantial as arguments, which if refuted leave him spiritually undone. He is more inclined to believe that in the process of living he experiences the Presence, and that his reasoning is only an awkward attempt to explain to himself what he has learned through living. He is confident that his mind works in the presence of an Intelligence higher than

his own, and that he has his being environed by a Will that everywhere constrains him. The truth is that whenever a man lives deeply he is conscious of touching a Reality which is wise and beneficent. Usually he feels that he is helped and guided. History is replete with examples. Washington was so impressed with the tokens of Providential direction in our struggle for independence that he could not refrain from uttering his convictions in his inaugural as president. Lincoln was convinced that in his dire need he received both strength and wisdom. His state papers fairly pulsate with this faith. Romanes, who certainly sounded all the depths and shallows of atheism, speaks his mature conviction when he says: "There is a vacuum in the soul which nothing can fill but God." The consciousness of the highest human beings that they are guided, comforted, strengthened by the Unseen Power above man is validated by a great multitude which no man can number.

A short time ago in a London book-stall I chanced upon a brochure by an American theologian — William Newton Clarke — which

set forth in a very convincing way the reality of religion. The author compared the lives of Huxley and Phillips Brooks. The men were contemporaries. Each was famous in his chosen field of activity. Once they met in London as guests of Lowell. Huxley talked, Brooks was silent. Huxley challenges our admiration for the sturdy integrity of his character, his brilliant talents, his sincere devotion to truth. Trained in the laboratory, he applied to religion the habits of thought which he had formed by years of scientific investigation. The results were unfavorable to religion, and he coined the word "agnostic" to express his attitude toward the supreme affirmations of the Christian faith. In all this he was conscientious and true to himself.

In this region of thought and experience of which Huxley said he was ignorant, Phillips Brooks lived and moved and had his being. He was as conscious of the relationship of his soul to God as he was of the relationship of his body to the earth. "Religion," he affirmed, "comes directly from the soul of God laid immediately upon and pressing itself into the

soul of every one of his children." Again he utters his own experience: "Less and less, I think, grows the consciousness of seeking God. Greater and greater grows the certainty that he is seeking us and giving himself to us to the completest measure of our present capacity. . . . There is such a thing as putting ourselves in the way of God's overflowing love and letting it break upon us till the response of love comes, not by struggle, not even by deliberation, but by necessity, as the echo comes when the sound strikes the rock." In the sweet and precious sense of the encompassing and inflowing love of God the famous preacher lived. He proclaimed with ever increasing power the reality of an abundant, free, glorious life of the loving soul in God. He spoke not as the scribes, but with authority. Upon these high certainties his spirit fed. He tested them by the strain of life. The strength coming to him from the Unseen made his soul virile and radiant, a glowing pillar of light and hope. Such spiritual strength, sanity, and beauty are not produced by hallucinations. It is inconceivable that such a robust and sover-

eign spiritual life should be lived in a vacuum. If atheism is true, then Brooks, and the innumerable multitude of the most luminous and commanding characters of history, grew up, were vitalized, and became mighty in a realm of nothingness. If atheism is true, the best lives are nourished in a void. If God cannot be known, then the glorious company of the saints were not merely deluded, they could not have lived. "If Brooks was right, Huxley suffered limitations that robbed him of his birthright. If Huxley was right, Brooks, by all sound reason, was impossible. There is no need of affirming atheism and materialism out and out, in order to render Brooks and his life impossible. Such agnosticism as Huxley's will answer just as well. If one cannot legitimately affirm anything concerning the reality of God, the soul, and the eternal life, then the satisfaction, enthusiasm, exaltation of Brooks in view of them was quite unjustified, and can never be worthily entertained by a right-thinking man. If all men thought as Huxley thought, no man could ever live as Brooks lived."

One cannot refrain from asking, if this world of religious experience in which the great preacher lived was real, why was it closed to Huxley? The answer is to be found in the method each pursued. Brooks was a lover of man and his works. While not blind to the beauties of nature, he preferred cathedrals to mountains. His interest was in man and his experiences, rather than in nature and its methods. The prolonged study he gave to man, and human needs and satisfactions, made God and the abundant life which the soul may live in him very real. He was confident that the higher faculties of our nature are correlated with a Being who gives grace and strength. He was certain that his own experience, and the experiences of the faithful in all generations, verified the essential truths of religion.

Huxley, on the other hand, was chiefly interested in the study of nature and its methods. When he turned his attention to religion he endeavored to explain the world of personal relationships by the natural laws with which he was familiar. He made the mistake of applying the laws and methods of the physical

laboratory to the interpretation of man and his experiences. This inevitably led to intellectual confusion. Fluids and gases are not the measure of all things. There are forces which do not dwell in matter. There are truths which cannot be known by induction from material facts. In Huxley's system of thought there was no rational explanation for Phillips Brooks, while in the philosophy of Brooks there was room for Huxley and all his discoveries. Yet the great scientist lived too deeply not to touch the Everlasting Reality and to attain the strength, if not the joy of faith. He was profoundly impressed with the balanced justice of nature, and his confidence in the goodness of the Unknown is beautifully expressed in the words written by his wife, which he requested to have engraved upon his tombstone : —

“Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep;
For still He giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.”

Such a comparison as we have made deepens the conviction that the chief differences between good men lie quite largely, not in vital

experiences, but in their methods of interpretation and in the language they employ.

IV

New Light upon the Nature of Sin

Sin and the sinner we have always with us, but we view them in quite a different light from that in which our fathers beheld them. You are familiar with the ancient solution of man's condition.

"In Adam's fall
We sinned all."

Because of the first man's transgression the poison of sin is in the blood of all his descendants. We all partake of his condemnation. An evolutionist naturally finds the cause of the world's evil elsewhere than in the sin of Adam. Man, he believes, is emerging from the brute. He is cumbered with a heavy animal inheritance, retaining in his nature much of the swine and the tiger. He is "stuccoed o'er with quadrupeds," and these bestial passions sweep him into much sin.

Moreover, being imperfect, his vision is not clear, nor his wisdom mature, therefore his

moral judgments are often wrong and disastrous.

But with the fathers we recognize that sinfulness is more than the result of animality and of ignorance. There is in it an element of perversity. Men deliberately centre their lives upon self rather than upon God. They put their wills in opposition to his purposes, and close their hearts to the diviner influences. Sin's tragedy consists in the fact that men practically renounce God's sovereignty over their lives, and seek, instead of his will, the gratification of their own desires. Sin is selfishness, and out of selfishness flows the tears and anguish of the world.

In another respect are we antipodal to our fathers. They considered sin to be natural to a depraved humanity. We conceive it to be unnatural. They said, "To err is human." We affirm that to err is the denial of humanity. They declared that the nature of man is evil. We quote Aristotle's saying that the nature of a thing is what it is at its best. We assert that man in his true estate is a child of God; that when he sins he wanders away from his

Father's house to dwell among the swine. But he is still a son and the appeal is to be made to his sonship. Sin is the repudiation of his real nature, a severing of his essential relationships. Being thus a rejection of God's love and a degradation of one's self, sin appears more awful than it seems when considered as the inevitable action of a demonized person.

Gladstone once said that the chief religious characteristic of our day is "the waning consciousness of sin." Certainly that profound sense of personal guilt of which we read in the lives of the ancient saints is not a feature of our modern religious life. We are less introspective and less critical of our moods. Yet probably there never has been a time in history when so many people felt the burden of the evil of the world. In our day there is a strong, deep, ever-increasing social consciousness. The realization of the evil condition of men, and of our personal obligation to do a man's share in bettering the lives of the less fortunate, has taken the place of that sense of individual unworthiness before God to which our fathers bore witness. We are less

alive than they to sin against God ; we are more keenly aware of the crimes against humanity. The future generation which perceives that whatsoever is done to humanity is done to God will comprehend the more perfect truth of which the thought of the fathers and our own apprehensions are but segments.

V

New Conceptions of the Way of Salvation

In chemistry a slight change in the formula produces vastly different results. A trifling modification of proportion in the ingredients affects the product. No one would affirm that in the spiritual world an entirely new truth had been discovered, or a unique power released, analogous to the finding of radium among the physical forces. Yet there has been so marked a change of emphasis, and such a readjustment of values, that both the philosophy and the experience of religion have been altered.

The former conception of salvation has been revised. The generation preceding ours commonly thought of salvation as future glorifi-

cation. The saved were those who were sure of going to heaven. To-day salvation is considered rather as a present experience. The saved are those who were once "consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, but are now consciously right, superior and happy" through the influence of religion. We think of salvation in terms of character, not in terms of condition. It is the adequate and symmetrical development of one's nature. Even our ideals of character have been modified, and I think lowered. Edwards, like the spiritual leaders of all the Christian centuries, aspired after an habitual and almost superhuman exaltation of soul, that he might live consciously in the presence of God, and be one with him in desire and purpose. The modern man is quite satisfied to be decent and respectable. He desires poise and balance rather than spiritual elevation.

Faith is as great a word with us as with the fathers, but we use it in a somewhat different sense. We are seriously trying to empty the word of much of the content which it has held for fifteen centuries, and to employ it in its

primitive and practical significance. Many generations of men have considered faith as closely akin to credulity. It has meant accepting without reservation a creed or a plan of salvation. But that notion is rapidly changing. Faith has to-day essentially the same significance in religion as in business. It is insight plus valor. You perceive certain conditions of the market and you have the courage to take the risk. There is a spiritual as well as a business judgment. You are confronted by ideals which you perceive to be of superlative worth and beauty. You recognize certain elemental laws which should govern the actions of men. You cannot demonstrate with mathematical precision the validity of these truths and ideals, but your conviction of their worth is such that you give them full loyalty. Life tests the accuracy of your insight and faith becomes certitude.

But what does faith perceive and appropriate? Paul has gloriously stated faith's object in the triumphant sentence: "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death." In the material world when a force is discovered working

in an orderly and continuous manner its operation is called a law. We speak of the law of gravitation because we discern a force acting in a predictable way. Now in nature there is a power that works unceasingly towards disintegration. This power of death is met and overcome by another power operating in the interests of life. Hence the earth continually renews its beauty and fruitfulness through the law of the spirit of life in the physical world. In us there is a law working toward selfishness and animality. It leads to sin and death. Just as clearly do we recognize an upbuilding power strengthening us in righteousness, goodness, and truth. Matthew Arnold calls it "a Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness"; others denominate it "the spirit of the Living God"; Paul designates it as the "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." All those energies which were manifested so wonderfully in Christ are the redeeming forces in the world of the spirit.

Faith is the insight which perceives and the valor which appropriates this Spirit of Life, whose persuasions and power we feel in

our own souls, whose glory shone in the face of Jesus Christ, and whose ongoings have marked the progress of the race. It is the venture which the soul makes in obedience to its intuitions.

This vital conception of faith causes those who hold it to affirm that church membership should be conditioned only upon fidelity to the spiritual realities manifested in Christ.

We have a longer look backward upon this law of the spirit of life than was given to the fathers. When science first unveiled to us the illimitable past, we were dismayed before the vision of the fearful waste and carnage by which our present civilization was achieved. The world of nature seemed antipodal in every respect to the love revealed upon Calvary. But profounder research has discovered that love and sacrifice have cosmic roots. From the beginning the law of the struggle for life has been paralleled by the kindlier law of the struggle for the life of others. Animal life has been perpetuated because the strong have defended and cared for the weak. Through the law of love mankind exists. The mother goes

down to death for the child; the helpless infant lives because the basic law of the family is gentleness, patience, and sacrifice. Families have become tribes, and the tribes nations, through the law of the family — mutual consideration and helpfulness — extending in ever widening circles. Courtesy, integrity, coöperation are indispensable in a highly organized social structure. The love that shone so gloriously on Calvary is now seen to be woven into all life as a law of existence, and to be having increasing influence as humanity approaches the divine likeness. In this new apprehension of love as the architectonic law supporting all life, we have an ampler illustration than was given to men of other days of that spirit of Christ by whom all things were created and in whom all things consist.

We have a broader as well as a more lengthened vision of the grace of God. It is not many generations back since men believed in a limited salvation. Less than a hundred years ago the whole pagan world was considered lost, and their religions to be the snare of the Evil One. Our generation for the most part believes

that God is the Father of all mankind, and that his mercies are as wide as humanity. We assert with Paul that God has not left himself without a witness in every heart, and we confess that Mahomet, Gautama, Confucius were true, if partial, interpreters of the Eternal, and that their religions represent genuine strivings after God. What to our fathers

“seemed an idol hymn, now breathes of Thee,
Tuned by faith’s ear to some celestial melody.”

This broader conception of the divine indwelling fills us with a large hope for the salvation of the world lying beyond the borders of Christendom. The great Catholic missionary Xavier, sailing by some islands where he could not land, dipped a brush in holy water and waving it in the sign of the cross towards them, claimed the inhabitants for the church. We would claim them for God because they are his children and in them his spirit strives.

The doctrine of the Atonement, which has been the central teaching of the church from the very beginning, has for us some new meanings. I will mention three insights into its significance characteristic of modern thought.

The first was clearly formulated in this country by Horace Bushnell, and was powerfully proclaimed by Henry Ward Beecher and Phillips Brooks. It is the nature of God, they asserted, to love men in their sins for the purpose of helping them out of their evil condition. Love cannot fully disclose itself except by suffering even unto the uttermost. Christ by his death revealed that divine compassion which loved us from the foundation of the world, and which will not let us go, although it pays the extreme cost. Jesus brought that compassionate love so effectively into history as to win multitudes to reconciliation with God. Secondly, we think of the Atonement as an eternal process. The three hours, suffering on Calvary, was more than an event; it was the declaration of the holy love of the atoning God which has been meeting sin from the beginning, is even now bearing its weight, and will contend with it until the triumphant end.

(As the eruption of a volcano reveals earth's central fires, so Calvary manifests a sacrificial love which from the beginning has been, is, and will be forever, winning men into oneness

with God. The third insight has to do with our part in wiping out the stain and overcoming the effects of sin. We have often heard the older ministers declare that "Jesus paid it all," and that our part was to accept a completed work. Something was indeed done upon the cross which needs not to be repeated. But sin is still in the world, its stain is yet on men's souls, its effects are piling up ever accumulating iniquities. When one repents of his sin, and sets himself resolutely to repair the damage he has done, or to add to the good of the world, he has a sweet and consoling consciousness that he is working with God, that he is bearing his share of the common burden of humanity's sin, and that his own soul is being knit by closer ties to an atoning Redeemer. This consciousness of helping the Eternal Son of God bear his cross inspired those noble words of the apostle: "I fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ."

In our modern thought the Atonement is not solely a transaction upon Calvary, making possible the divine forgiveness of sins. It is

rather a world process of recovering man to his normal life with God, and of conquering the moral evil of the world by the loyalty of believers making effectual the sacrificial love of the Father manifested in Christ.

VI

The New Vision of a Social Gospel

Very significant is the change of emphasis from individual salvation to the establishment of the kingdom of God. The apostolic church was largely indifferent to the political and economic conditions of the time. They were looking for the immediate appearance of the Lord. After the apostles and the apostolic men fell on sleep and until our own day the dominant thought has been that out of a ruined world the church was to rescue every soul which could be saved. The prevailing cry has been the one which went up from the stricken field of Waterloo: "All is lost, save himself who can!" This is alien to the modern pulpit. We teach that the individual cannot save himself alone. One finds his life by losing it in self-forgetful service in the interests of the

kingdom. The modern Christian is taught to turn his eyes away from himself and to catch the glorious vision of a redeemed world. His supreme duty is to bring the spirit of Christ into his business and social relations. He must seek to establish truth, justice, and righteousness within the sphere of his power.

The Reverend F. B. Meyer, who in his early ministry was an individualist, in describing the change in his own aims and methods, has aptly chronicled the new ideals and efforts. "I used to live," he said, "in a little hut on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho so that I might help travelers who had been beset by thieves. But lately I have moved into Jerusalem itself, and am hammering away at Caiaphas and Pilate to send a company of soldiers to root out the whole nest of robbers!"

VI

IMMORTALITY

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VI

IMMORTALITY

IF men were merely physical beings they would never dream of immortality; if they were wholly spiritual they would probably never doubt it. Living on the borderland, having bodies formed of the dust and spirits which feel a kinship with something above the earth, they alternate between faith and doubt. The notion of an endless life grows out of our sense of the Infinite. We are like men upon a small island; we walk but a short distance in any direction before we confront an unmeasured and unsounded mystery. The infinite is all about us. If we study the flower in the crannied wall, our thoughts are soon lost in the incomprehensible. When the dust at our feet is analyzed it leads to the conception of vortices of force; and if we probe for the secret of force, we immediately stand in the presence of the Eternal Energy. Every thoughtful man's experience is that of the Hebrew sage: "I said,

I will water my best garden; and will water abundantly my garden bed; and lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea." This consciousness of the infinite, environing life upon every side, awakens the sense of the infinite within himself. Deep calls to deep. He feels like

"A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand
Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
Their moon-led waters white."

The thunder of the Eternal, which he hears in his silent and meditative moments, arouses and confirms an instinctive hope that he is not a creature of a moment, but will live a conscious life in that Eternal out of which he came and to which he returns.

Like all future events life after death is incapable of proof. At its best it is a reasonable anticipation, a faith which grows clearer and stronger in the tests of research and experience. Has modern investigation brought new oil to feed the flames of our hope, or has its deeper minings released noxious gases of negation to extinguish the fires upon the altar?

I

The Atmosphere of Faith

Before presenting any positive arguments for immortality it may be well to indicate an atmosphere created by the newer knowledge in which faith may live. I think we may affirm without hesitation that nothing has been discovered by modern science, which makes belief in a life after death irrational. The once formidable atheistic dogma that there could be no consciousness without brain has become outworn. It has been demonstrated that the molecular action of the brain cannot be translated into terms of consciousness. You have not explained thought by tracing the brain paths of the molecules any more than you have adequately explained music by describing the scraping of horsehair on the intestines of cats. "Nothing," says Mr. Fiske, "could be more grossly unscientific than the famous remark of Cabanis, that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile. It is not even correct to say that thought goes on in the brain. What goes on in the brain is an amazingly complex series of molecular movements, with which thought and

feeling are in some way related, not as effects or causes, but as concomitants. . . . The materialistic assumption that there is no such state of things, and that the life of the soul accordingly ends with the life of the body, is perhaps the most baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy." Professor William James speaks in a similar strain: "When the physiologist who thinks that his science cuts off all hope of immortality pronounces the phrase, 'Thought is a function of the brain,' he thinks of the matter just as he thinks when he says, 'Steam is a function of the tea-kettle.' . . . But in the world of physical nature productive function of this sort is not the only kind of function with which we are familiar. We have also releasing or permissive function; and we have transmissive function." As when the trigger of the cross-bow releases the arrow, or a lens transmits the light. "When," continues Professor James, "we think of thought as a function of the brain, we are not required to think of productive function only; we are entitled also to consider permissive or transmissive function."

It may be that the brain permits a spiritual energy within us to find expression, even as an organ allows one's emotions to utter themselves. Injure the organ and the musician is hampered in his self-disclosure. Or the brain may transmit thought, as glass transmits light. The condition of the glass determines the light which shines through. Yet the glass does not create the light. Evidently what we learn in the laboratory neither proves nor disproves immortality. The question transcends its sphere and belongs to one of moral probability.

A real impediment to faith in immortality is our inability to conceive it. We cannot form a mental image of an existence separated from the body. Our difficulty is often one of the imagination. We are unable to make appear real what lies beyond experience. The imagination is unable to visualize a life independent of time and sense. Paul met this limitation by using the illustration of a seed. Its corruptible body decays, but its vital germ reappears in another form. In wireless telegraphy modern knowledge has furnished us with a still more forcible analogy. The elec-

trical fluid in the sender's instrument receives impressions and a character, then leaving its place of bondage and character forming, it is committed to an ether, which eye hath not seen, nor the heart conceived; ultimately it finds an appropriate body where it can display its character, and the memories which it has never lost. In this flying message we have thought, experience, character, maintaining individuality without a body that is either tangible or visible. Surely it is not incredible that the spirit of man, loosed from its prison-house and flying along the spiritual courses of the world, may find a medium through which it can body forth its life.

It is perhaps the testimony of our senses which presents the most formidable obstacle to our faith in immortality. We see men die and the process of dissolution begin. Every evidence of our senses indicates that death ends all. But just here the advance of knowledge comes to our aid. Accumulated experience has taught us to trust the conclusions of reason as against the witness of the senses. Our sight informs us that the earth is flat;

our reason has forced us to believe that it is round. The sun appears to move about the stable earth ; reason affirms that the earth revolves about the sun. Sense-perception bears indisputable testimony to the solidity of a piece of wood. It looks and feels like an inert mass of substantial matter. But in the face of the concurrent testimony of both sight and touch, we credit the affirmation of reason that the apparently motionless wood is composed of centres of force, each separate from the others, and related much as the planets are in the solar system. If modern science has taught us anything, it is that the senses are not infallible witnesses, and that it is admissible to trust the deductions of the reason even against their testimony. We are justified, therefore, in taking the question of the continuity of life out of the court of the senses, and of appealing to the higher tribunal of the reason. We may even go further, and declare that the senses, credible within a limited sphere, are usually mistaken in the higher issues. Things are not what they seem. Not infrequently the fact is the reverse of the appearance.

Having prepared for an argument by removing the objection raised by the senses, and by showing that materialism has failed to prove that consciousness is the product of brain activity, and having lessened the difficulty of the imagination by presenting the analogy of wireless telegraphy, we come to the more positive part of the discussion, and ask what effect the evolutionary hypothesis has had upon faith in immortality. I think it has greatly strengthened that faith.

II

Indications of Immortality furnished by Evolution

Evolution gives us a long look back into the past. It unveils the primal fire mist, it reveals a cooling earth, the coming of vegetable and animal life. Millions of years were consumed in this upward movement of creation. The ages toiled, æon succeeded æon before the world was fitted to be the habitation of man. With the advent of humanity physical evolution ceased. All subsequent progress has been human progress. Natural selection, having framed man's body, began to work upon his

brain. Man's growth has not been in increased bodily stature, but in mental and spiritual power. At first a feeble creature, he has fought a steady and increasingly victorious battle against nature and against his own brute tendencies. At infinite cost he has erected his civilization. With pain inconceivable he has thought out and established his institutions. Yet he has paid the price willingly, for he has been sustained by a deep conviction that his efforts served a Power not himself. He has not worked merely for his own comfort; he has fought in the name of God. He has labored under the compulsion of a heavenly vision of personal and racial victory over sin and death. He has felt that he was fighting no sham battle. Immense issues hung upon his fidelity, and his devotion augmented the glory of God.

A man, standing in the twentieth century, and gazing back over the long, toilsome, costly process from the fire-mist up to primitive man, and from primeval man to our present highly organized society, cannot readily believe that he is contemplating the haphazard whirl of

unintelligent forces. It has not been a simple game of chance; the dice have been loaded. There has been an increasing purpose running through the ages, working towards man and the fulfillment of his destiny. Surely the unfolding purpose prophesies an outcome worthy of the process. If materialism is right, and humanity returns to the dust from whence it came, and the earth is at last only a burned-out cinder; if the struggle of the ages, the prayers of the holy, the sacrifice of martyrs, the trust of the faithful, the aspirations of saintly minds, the devotion of the brave, ultimate in dust and ashes, then we are put to "permanent intellectual confusion." The ages have toiled and brought forth nothing. The Eternal has blown a soap bubble, and painted it with wondrous colors at awful cost of agony to the iridescent figures, and then allowed it to burst! The wisdom, power, and sacrificial love, revealed in the long and orderly upward movement, create the expectation that the culmination will be worth the cost.

It may well be replied that this argument simply indicates that the world process must

have a meaning, and that that meaning may be in God himself, apart from humanity, for his glory and not for our gain. But certainly it is impossible for us to conceive of any outcome in which humanity does not share, or to believe the Eternal to be a Moloch, who satisfies himself and consumes his laborers.

The evolutionary hypothesis, however, enables us to make the application more personal. There was a time when the highest form of life upon the planet was a jelly-like mass, floating about in the water. It was without power of locomotion, sightless, senseless, capable only of absorbing such food particles as the primeval ocean drifted against it. What Intelligence coming to this planet from another sphere would have ventured the prophecy that an object so lowly could give birth

“To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome” ?

Yet the push of nature was behind it. As the centuries and millenniums passed, life acquired the power of locomotion ; it developed the faculty of vision ; it accumulated experiences, becoming conscious and then self-conscious ;

it attained the noble faculty of reason; it distinguished sensations, and choosing between them, became aware of freedom and of responsibility to select the best; it formed glorious ideals of a nobler self; then it began to crave to be fashioned in the likeness of the Perfect Righteousness, and to commune with the Infinite Goodness; and to crown all these marvelous achievements it dreamed of immortality! In this steady acquisition of riches there is a foreshadowing of the future. If life in its long upward journey has acquired locomotion, sense-perception, reason, consciousness, self-determination, a feeling of moral responsibility, it is not incredible that when it thirsts for immortality the craving is a prophecy that the desire will be satisfied. Having achieved so much, the dream of continued existence is surely rational. Life has already made the journey from the mollusk to the mind of Plato and the heart of Paul. The past at least is secure. Having gathered such amazing spoils, it is not unreasonable to believe that this instinctive reaching-out for greater things in the future is indicative of a still further advance. If life

has become personal in man, it is not strange if his anticipation of a life everlasting suggests that he has secreted the power of perpetuating that self through the night of death.

Evolution furnishes another argument for faith. Man stands confessedly at the head of the animal kingdom. He is the culmination of an age-long process of development. Yet it is just as evident that he has hardly begun his moral growth. Sovereign in the animal world, he is a child in the spiritual. Standing upon the mountain peak of nature, he stretches out his hands towards a higher world, whose breath he feels upon his brow. Below him is the sphere of instinct, force, necessity, appetite, impulse. Above and within him he perceives a diviner sphere of Reason, Righteousness, Love, Liberty, Aspiration. In this supernatural order, whose laws are so contradictory to the physical, he is but a child. Greatest in the range of the material, he is the least in the kingdom of the spiritual. It is surely not incredible that if the ages have put him on the summit of the natural, he shall yet climb the heights of the spiritual. If the physical evolu-

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tion has been completed, why should not the
spiritual be also perfected ?

III

Arguments drawn from the Nature of Man

A more comprehensive study of the nature of man has led to some valuable results, and to a restatement of our reasons for faith in a future life. Investigation, however, has as yet brought no scientific proof. The Society of Psychical Research, composed of some of the ablest scientists in England and America, has been seeking to ascertain whether the alleged communications from the departed are actual disclosures of living personalities beyond the veil, or are to be accounted for in other ways. The society has expended twenty-five years in patient pioneer work. It has learned much of the telepathic power of the mind, and something of that part of our being which lies below consciousness, and which is frequently called the subliminal self. Up to the present time no indisputable proof of survival has been produced, yet the evidence accumulated encourages hope that this field will not prove

barren. To use the figure with which Sir Oliver Lodge is credited, "As we tunnel the mountain, we seem to hear the picks of those who are digging from the other side." Professor James asserts, "I myself feel as if an external will to communicate were probably there . . . but if asked whether the will to communicate be Hodgson's or some mere spirit counterpart of Hodgson, I remain uncertain and await more facts, facts which may not point clearly to a conclusion for fifty or a hundred years."

We do not rest our hope of survival so heavily as did our fathers on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Evidence which was sufficient to persuade men in apostolic times must lose something of its convincing power as it recedes into the distance. We have learned that love and desire may be satisfied with evidence which is not indisputable to those farther removed. Most Christians to-day believe in the resurrection of Jesus because they believe first in immortality. If man, they reason, is immortal, then truly the supreme man is not sleeping under the Syrian stars. Less often than form-

erly does one hear arguments for the future life which are based upon the proofs of the empty tomb outside the walls of Jerusalem.

That the modern man's statement of his faith is not entirely a repetition of ancient arguments is seen in the use of a new term which he has introduced. Seldom does he speak of the immortality of the soul. Soul is an abstract word. It lacks definite content. Personality is preferable, as being more concrete and definable. We know persons, but souls are hidden. We call a man a person because he has self-consciousness; he preserves his identity through all his earthly existence, even though every particle of his body changes; he can in a large measure dominate his environment, and win victories over temporal conditions; and more than all he has virtue or moral value. Self-consciousness, identity, self-determining activity, worth, these are the elemental factors of personality. Man is not a delicately constructed monument of dust. He has "a central core of spiritual life." The universe does not work through him as natural impulse, but is grasped and appropri-

ated into his personal being. He thinks of himself as an original source of energy, and as physical force cannot be destroyed, he does not consider himself to be credulous in hoping that the original kind of force which he knows as his personality shall endure.

But man realizes that he is only an incomplete person. He has not yet attained to the fullness of his stature. His powers are not yet developed. He is only partially free. There is a greater possible self enfolded in the actual self. "Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be." He feels the pressure of the ideal. He is

"Galled with his confines, and troubled yet more with his
vastness.

Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his goal."

The best men are not supremely interested in the mere continuity of this present imperfect self. They yearn for a completion of being. They demand a conception of life as a whole, which shall make this present existence significant and well worth while. They feel that the chief object to be desired is not continuity of life, but a certain quality of life. The saints have hungered not for length of days,

they have passionately craved what the New Testament calls "eternal life," "life indeed," the "abundant life." The One who attained to this fullness of life most completely assumed immortality as a necessary presupposition. He apparently took it for granted, as an architect presupposes space in projecting a cathedral. One is surer of his postulates than of the conclusions of his reason. To Jesus this way of living was of such infinite value, the soul living the abundant life was so rooted in God, and saturated with his presence, it was so fully a partaker of the divine nature, that to think of it as the plaything of time and accident was impossible. The persons thus nourished upon eternal realities must live a life eternal in its quality.

Our Lord, whose spirit derived its vitality from no temporal sources, assumed continued superiority over physical dissolution. He believed that God's children would all grow up. What in him, the perfect personality, was an unargued conviction, in imperfect men is a premonition. Knowing our lives to be incomplete and fragmentary, we instinctively antici-

pate an opportunity for them to come to their fullness. Tennyson has given classic expression to this hope and to the reasons upon which it is based: —

“ Here sits he shaping wings to fly :
His heart forbodes a mystery :
He names the name Eternity.

“ That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

“ He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro’ thick veils to apprehend
A labor working to an end.”

Man, sitting here in the dust in all his incompleteness, is conscious of undeveloped powers. He feels himself made for a grander destiny than any he has yet experienced, and the thought of something above time, eternity, is born. Imperfect, he dreams of the Perfect, and without visible reward, freely gives himself to the attainment of ideals. Conscious of these ideals, aspirations, and imperatives within him, he perceives a Friendly Power in the universe working toward great ends. “This instinct for a future life,” Tennyson once said,

“is a presumption of its truth.” And no one has stated more forcibly than he that deep spiritual intuition, which high souls have, that life will come to its fulfillment : —

“The wages of sin is death : If the wages of virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm
 and the fly,
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just :
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky :
 Give her the wages of going on and not to die.”

Tennyson with strong conviction reasoned of a life to come, but Browning asserted it as an inevitable presupposition. He considered man too great a being to be held in the bounds of the physical and temporal. His thoughts are scarcely to be packed into a narrow act, his unmeasured thirst for good causes him to transcend his past, while

“In man’s self arise
 August anticipations, symbols, types
 Of a dim splendor ever on before.”

Our life here is a broken column, an unfinished circle ; —

“It is God’s task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthly.”

Modern scholarship has, indeed, thrown light on the essential nature of personality and has made us realize that after all we are only potential persons. The gap between what we are, and what we aspire to be and know we ought to be, is making the present generation feel the need of a future to make life rational and complete. "Till it is felt," says Martineau, "that heaven is needed to complete the history of earth, till men become conscious of capacities for which their present sphere of action is too contracted, till the wants of the intellect and of the affections cry aloud within them for the boundless and the eternal, the distant words of Christian promise will die away, ere they reach their hearts."

This premonition of a future, which has been characteristic of humanity, is rendered all the more credible when we reflect on the richness of man's equipment. We are too royally gifted for a successful and contented animal existence. The very wealth of our resources unfits us for a prosperous physical life. We should be better animals were we less splendidly endowed.

“ Know, man hath all that Nature hath but More,
And in that More lie all his hopes of good.”

If life is adjustment of inner relations to outer relations, and that which is outer is simply the material, then this More misshapes him. Take out his reason and replace it with a few strong instincts, and he would make fewer mistakes. Put a sensitive impulse in the place of conscience, and he would doubtless walk easier in the way of life and with less suffering; quench all aspirations and destroy the power of framing ideals, and he would be far healthier and happier. It is the More which brings into humanity most of the sickness, all of the agony of remorse and the torment of guilt, all of those longings and desires which keep us in perpetual discontent. The brute is much better adapted than man to a purely material environment. Man is too opulently dowered for a life that is of the earth earthy. As an animal he is not a success. Nature in too ambitious a mood has made a magnificent mistake.

But may not this More, — conscience, reason, imagination, free will, thirst for the best,

— which misfits man for a merely physical existence, relate him to a world that is above the physical? May not this More be prophetic of something beyond? We are, even now, living in our second life. In our former or prenatal state we had an existence which was both adapted to its environment and was forming faculties for the life we are now living. Our eyes were wonderfully fashioned while we were yet in the darkness; our ears were framed in the silence; our limbs were moulded when they were not needed. These were all prophetic of a life to come. The eye indicated that some day we should live in a world of light; the ear betokened a place of sound; the limbs promised a condition of activity and freedom then unpossessed. We died to that embryonic life, and through pain were born into a world where the More, superfluous in the old environment, became the faculties by which we now live in a world of light and music and freedom. Why is it not reasonable to believe that our spiritual faculties — our thirst for holiness, our visions of God, our dream of eternity, our sense of the moral

framework of the universe — are premonitory of that higher state of being for which the holiest have always yearned? The Christian faith affirms that the process and discipline of life is unveiling a spiritual image within us. This spiritual self is correlated to a spiritual world, diviner than this, where it shall come to the fullness of its being. If we hold this faith, we have a rational explanation of the meaning of life and of its discipline. Set this faith aside, and we have to explain a creature with the life of a worm, and yet with the endowments of one of the sons of God! We must explain a profligacy of nature which overloads with fine wealth, and a wantonness of nature which, having given superlative gifts, ruthlessly disappoints that which has been the life and confident faith of the holiest spirits.

We believe in immortality because we trust the fidelity of the Eternal Power by whom all things were created. We have been fashioned in the womb of the universe. Its life is within us and its nature has been stamped upon us. What is deepest in man bears the pledge of

that which is deepest in the universe. What is wrought in the fabric of our being has been given us by the Power which made us. The Creator has certainly placed deep within us a sense of the infinite. He has given to us the forward look. He has inspired our dreams of the Perfect. He has bestowed upon us the realization and the love of values which are in themselves unconditioned by time and superior to it. "That religious instincts," says Lecky, "are as truly a part of our nature as are our appetites and our nerves, is a fact which all history establishes, and which forms one of the strongest proofs of the reality of that unseen world to which the soul of man continually tends." These instinctive faiths in the future, and in the worth of the spiritual, are the promises of God, and out of his royal bounty he will fulfill them. Every discovery we make reveals to us that the universe is immeasurably richer in possibilities of blessing than we imagined. If Nature is always more opulent than we supposed, surely life, the crowning glory of nature, will not be poorer than our hopes. God is not mocked, neither

does he mock us. Who of us can fail to agree with these convincing words of Martineau?—

“If the celestial hope be a delusion, we plainly see who are the mistaken. Not the mean and groveling souls, who never reached so great a thought; not the drowsy and easy natures, who are content with the sleep of sense through life, and the sleep of darkness ever after; not the selfish and pinched of conscience, of small thought and smaller love; no, these in such case are right, and the universe *is* on their miserable scale. The deceived are the great and holy, whom all men, aye, even these very insignificants themselves, revere; the men who have lived for something better than their happiness, and spent themselves in the race, or fallen at the altar of human good:— Paul with his mighty and conquering courage; yes, Christ himself, who vainly sobbed his spirit to rest on his Father’s imaginary love, and without result commended his soul to the Being whom he fancied himself to reveal. The self-sacrifice of Calvary was but a tragic and barren mistake; for Heaven disowns the god-like prophet of Nazareth, and takes part with

those who scoffed at him and would have him die ; and is insensible to the divine fitness which even men have felt, when they either recorded the supposed fact, or invented the beautiful fiction, of Christ's ascension. Whom are we to revere, and what can we believe, if the inspiration of the highest created natures are but cunningly devised fables? But it is not so: and no one who has found true guidance of heart from these noblest sons of heaven, will fear to stake his futurity, and the immortal life of his departed friends, on their vaticinations. *These*, of all things granted to our ignorance, are assuredly most like the hidden realities of God ; which may be greater, but will not be less, than the prophets and seers have foretold, and even our own souls, when gifted with the highest and clearest vision, discern as truths not doubtful or afar off."

Our faith in a life hereafter rests ultimately upon our trust in the fidelity of the Living God. He has given us the wonderful gift of personality, though as yet we are in the germ ; he has laid his law upon us to live a life which in its nature is superior to time, and is but im-

perfectly realized in time; he has given us a spiritual equipment which unfits us for a merely physical existence, but which relates us to a system above the material order, and is prophetic of a life to come; he has consumed countless ages in bringing man thus far on his journey and the pilgrimage is still in progress. The goal will be reasonable and good, commensurate with the cost of the process. Our Maker implanted the dream of a splendor beyond, and created those conditions out of which grew our hope of reunion with those who have gone before. He

“forged that other influence
That heat of inward evidence
By which [we] doubt against the sense.”

Assuredly the desire he has implanted will be satisfied according to the greatness of his wisdom and his loving power.

We often hear men declare that they have no wish for a future life; they are willing at any time to lay down the burden; and the thought of an endless sleep is sweet to them. We all have these moods, but they are moods of depression. They result usually from disap-

pointment, or lowered vitality. John Addington Symonds was expressing the feelings of a sick soul when he wrote: "Until the immortality of the individual is irrefragably demonstrated, the sweet, the immeasurably precious hope of ending with this life the ache and languor of existence, remains open to burdened human personalities." When life is at its best we are eager for further venture. It is when we are finding our lives by losing them in service that we are glad to continue in the wars of God, and anticipate the joy and vision of the redeemed. Whatever may be the varying inclination of the individual, it is indisputable that the race has had a strong premonition of a future which will fulfill and explain this life.

Belief in the life hereafter is not only a reasonable hope, it is more reasonable than its opposite. It is reasonable to trust in the highest in man — his ideals, hopes, spiritual intuitions, and reasoned faiths; the highest in history — the universal faith of the supreme souls as against the materialistic and narrow views of the lowest; the highest in the universe — the

justice, righteousness, and reasonableness of God. "A king was sitting with his warriors round the fire in a gloomy castle. It was night and winter. Suddenly a little bird flew in at an open door, and flew out again at another. The king spoke, and said: 'This bird is like man in the world; it flew in from the darkness, and out again into the darkness, and was not long in the warmth and light.' 'King,' replied the oldest of the warriors, 'even in the dark the bird is not lost, but finds its nest.'"

IV

Modern Ideas of the Future

We are less certain than our fathers of the condition of those who have passed beyond the veil. With the law of growth so ineffaceably impressed upon our minds, we cannot think of the redeemed as being immediately perfected. Development seems to be the prescribed method of life, and we conceive of all pure souls as mounting an ever ascending pathway of power and joy. The vast prison-house of torture, whose material flames and endless torments so scared the men of other days, is rapidly

fading from the thoughts of men to-day. That men in that other life will reap the harvests of the seeds sown here, we all believe, but of the nature and conditions of that reaping we have no more knowledge than our fathers had. Some among us hold to the ultimate annihilation of the incorrigibly wicked. God, so runs the argument, is the life of the world. The person who fails to live a life in God by faith, or who bars the doors of the soul to the Divine Spirit, is not in vital connection with the source of all spiritual life, and finally goes where the flame of a candle goes when it goes out. Others cherish the hope that every wandering soul will finally seek and find the way of life. Men are made in the image of the Infinite Reason; will they not all at length act in reason and in righteousness? Jeremiah saw a potter in Jerusalem take the vessels that had been marred in the process of making, and put them again upon the wheel to be fashioned into other vessels. If the potter can work his will with the refuse, cannot the good will of God take humanity's broken lives and reform them into objects of use and beauty?

Many Christians to-day utterly refuse to draw the line of opportunity at the grave. They believe that there is no warrant for the dogma, either in Scripture or in reason, that probation ends at death. Their hope follows the broken vessel

“ Into that sad obscure sequestered state
Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
He else made first in vain ; which must not be.”

Still others recognize the possibility that man in his freedom may persist in evil choices and thus enfold himself in darkness and in misery. Men to-day are not inclined to dogmatize upon what takes place in the great Beyond. They trust the good and the evil alike to the justice and the mercy of God.

VII
IMPROVEMENT

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Bank of Wisdom

For the first time in human history the language of civilization is being changed from writing that can be read with the necked eye, to an electronic format that can only be read with special electronic equipment. It is the intent of the Bank of Wisdom to convert to electronic format as much old Scholarly, Historic and Freethought material as possible. We believe there are certain kinds of necessary historic, religious and philosophical information that may be left out of the data banks of the future, factual information that challenges or disproves current ideas and beliefs that the established powers of our society rest upon. Such suppressed information will be necessary for future generations to use to build an upward evolution for their society. The Bank of Wisdom intends to preserve that needed knowledge.

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

**There is no superstition in Wisdom,
And no wisdom in superstition.**

VII

IMPROVEMENT

IN closing this series of familiar talks I wish to make what the Puritan preachers called the "improvement." Having unfolded their doctrine, they applied it rigorously to the minds and hearts of their hearers. The contemplation of lofty themes is valueless unless what is a truth to the reason becomes a law to the will. There are four considerations which I would leave indelibly impressed upon your minds. The first is that profound saying of Goethe's:—

"Mankind is always progressing,
But man is always the same."

If humanity is advancing in knowledge, we must expect ever changing conceptions, and enlarged interpretations of the significance of life and the mystery of nature. Our little systems must have their day and cease to be. New light will come with every forward movement.

But man is always the same. His deep needs change not. The fundamental laws of his being are permanent. The generations slake their thirst at the same fountains ; they see the same unfading Light ; they are sustained by the same unexhausted Strength. We have what our fathers had, and any spiritual advance of which we may boast is simply a stronger and larger grasp upon truths which are the permanent possession of the race. Forms of worship, systems of philosophy, ecclesiastical organizations are fashioned and pass away, but the essential elements of religion abide. Therefore, while we expect to have new theologies ever replacing the old, we must remember that beneath all divergencies of creed and forms of institutions we belong to a vast brotherhood of good men. When one doubts the creed in which he was reared he has not necessarily outgrown the religion of his fathers. He may as easily cast off the intellectual conceptions of former generations as a tree sheds its leaves. But let him not imagine that he has become superior to those needs which have revealed themselves in every earnest soul in all the cen-

turies. Neither in his conceit let him dream that he has opened undiscovered sources of grace and strength. He may think he has laid aside the Christian faith when he has only cast off his boyish notions of religion. There is a faith common to all good men. All spiritually minded persons stand in the holy succession of the prophets and apostles. Their differences arise mainly from diversities of temperament and peculiarities of speech. If we could understand one another, we should be surprised to learn how much we have in common. As Carlyle said of his friend John Sterling: "We agree in everything except our opinions."

A second thought should be remembered. If we have any reason for being, it is that we grow up, and do our part in making the world better. We are here to achieve a masterly and symmetrical development of our personalities, and to do good. It was a poet's true instinct which led Keats to write: "Call the world a vale of soul-making. Then you will find out the use of the world." Man is the measure of all things. Nothing is valuable except as it makes for manhood. "Men are not here to

make money, but money is here to make men." It was a clear-thinking student who said, "Man exists in order to grow better, and the world exists in order to help him."

If, and this is our third suggestion, a man is in this world for self-development and for service, we have a sure test of what is essential and of what is non-essential in religion. We often hear the assertion of different sects that belief in certain dogmas is necessary to salvation, or that specific rites are indispensable. We have at hand a very ready probe for these claims. Whatever ideals, opinions, principles enter vitally into character to affect it for good are essential; all else is of subordinate importance. For example. What a man practically believes and lays to heart about the nature of God reports itself ineffaceably in character. Firm belief in the divine righteousness and benignity makes for a nobler manhood than the opinion that the Eternal is unconscious Caprice. An ideal of holiness and an ideal of wealth shed a different lustre upon the devotee. But the quantity of water used in baptism is not evidenced in life. Two

men may be equally devout and good, although taking opposite sides in the dispute regarding the fall of man. Apostolical succession may be necessary to an ecclesiastical system, but its belief and practice do not develop the finer Christian graces. Are we not justified in affirming that whatever manifests itself in virility and beauty of character — such as faith in a good God, belief in the supremacy of those moods and spiritual forces which are covered by the name of Christ — is essential to religion; while all else, though important to a system of thought, or a form of government, is subordinate? Is it not pitiable that the divisions of Christendom arise from causes so insignificant, that most of them may be relegated to the limbo of the non-essential? They are the grief of angels, and will be the scoff of posterity.

The fourth truth which I would call to your minds follows naturally from what has been said. If we are in this world to come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of our personality, and if whatever is vital to religion discloses its worth in its effect upon character,

then it is evident that we may have certitude regarding the fundamentals of religion. This is well to remember, for too often the impression is given that religion after all is but a grand Surmise. I confess that I have little sympathy with the oft-quoted words of Tennyson :—

“ We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see.”

The poet would use language scientifically, but he conveys a false impression. He leaves us feeling that in spiritual matters we are infants crying in the night, while in mundane affairs we walk in the light. It is the speech of a bewildered soul groping in the darkness. Not thus would Christ have employed the word “know.” He knew God and the sanctions of the spiritual world. He was as certain of the unseen mansions in which his higher nature dwelt in fullness of strength and joy as he was of the temple in Jerusalem. The men of imposing and luminous religious characters of all times have considered the physical as the veil hiding the verities of the spiritual world. The temporal phantasmagoria will soon pass

away: indeed, it is continually passing; it is the Unseen that is known and abiding. No religious mind of genius and experience would admit that it is surer of what it beholds with the bodily eyes than of what it sees with the spiritual intuitions. "I know" is the familiar expression of the chief leaders in the realm of the spiritual, and not for a moment would they, or should we, be willing to give that strong word to be the exclusive possession of the senses. The religious man may have a certainty of spiritual things, which lies deeper in his heart, and is more authoritative over his conduct, than is his certainty of what his eyes perceive. Without stopping to quibble over the definition of a word, I think we are justified in declaring that we have real certitude of what enters vitally into character and conduct. Whatever stands the test of life is true. Falsehood does not form strong men. Error does not permanently enrich existence. The form in which we hold this germ of truth may be ludicrous, yet if our belief ministers to human well-being, the Eternal is in it. Our conceptions may be utterly inadequate, but we know

that we have a firm grasp on Reality, if our religion comes into our lives as strength and light.

There are two quite distinct types of men in the world, and their apprehension and experience of religion differ according to their peculiar temperament. Kipling, in one of his most virile poems, designates them as the sons of Mary and the sons of Martha. With them we are familiar. One, fine-grained, mystical, fond of study and lofty speculation, who sees the soft light of the ideal falling upon the stern realities of the world; the other, hard-headed, practical, self-sufficient, whose religion is to do his duty, tell the truth, and help his neighbors. The church has been largely controlled by the sons of Mary, and in their interests. They, for the most part, have preached the sermons, written the hymns, elaborated the creeds, which the sons of Martha have only half understood and less than half believed. They have named the saints, and made their remarkable conversions and ecstatic experiences the standards of the religious life. Many a full-blooded, healthy son of Martha, being

little interested in what he heard at church, having no keen sense of sin, and feeling no sweet consciousness of forgiveness, has felt that there is little in religion for him. Religion has been so exclusively interpreted in the language of the mystic that many practical men have felt that it is the luxury of a temperament and not a necessity of human nature.

All of you, as practical men doing the hard work of the world, would probably classify yourselves as the sons of Martha. Will you permit me, therefore, to state, as well as I may, what I conceive to be those simple, universal elements which are the essence of religion and which make their appeal to that in all men which lies deeper than temperamental peculiarities? Of religion there are many definitions current in our time. It has been called the "life of God in the soul of man"; "moral triumph through the vision and grace of the moral deity"; "the life and experience of the human soul in relation to higher spiritual Being." But Carlyle's rugged statement probably makes the strongest impression upon the

practical mind: "The thing a man does practically lay to heart and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his religion." Religion as thus defined is a conviction issuing in a vital relationship to God and men. It is man's attitude towards what is above him and around him. Now there is only one attitude for a sensible person to take towards that Power which alone is great. One is foolish to stand erect in the pride of self-sufficiency, confident that he is master of his fate and captain of his soul. A slight blow on the temple easily shatters this dream of egoism. Every true man recognizes that he is not his own. He came forth from the Eternal, and to the Eternal Will he must adjust himself. He knows that his supreme duty is to conform his character to the character of the Highest. He surrenders himself to the purposes of God and tries to be the man God would have him be, and to do the work which he believes the All Wise has assigned. "God whose I am and

whom I serve," is a thought constantly in his mind. He realizes that he is only a bond servant to a Lord; he is a voice or a hand to the Vast Soul that works in him and through him. He does his work as ever in the Great Taskmaster's eye.

Out of this attitude of loving obedience springs that superlative motive which is everywhere commanded in the Scriptures. The ultimate authority for right conduct, sanctioned by both the Old and New Testaments, is never economy, or popularity, or policy, but always the will and the character of God. The Jews were to be holy as God is holy. They were not to reap the corners of their fields nor to glean the vineyards, but to leave the remnants for the poor and the stranger, not because this generous policy would prevent labor troubles, but because "I am the Lord thy God," the Father of the needy and the Protector of the stranger. If a man takes this attitude of self-surrender towards God and endeavors to conform his character and deeds to the divine will, he is a religious man, whether he be a Baptist, a Unitarian, or a Catholic.

The Christian man has certain moods and dispositions which are habitual and characteristic. He does not act towards men out of his hurt-bearing impulses, but his disposition is one of good will, his prevailing moods are of kindness and justice, his feelings are sympathetic and humane. The apostle set the standard of this normal temper when he exclaimed, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

Besides having habitual relationships and a prevailing mood, the religious man must be dedicated to a Cause. Like his Master he feels that he is in the world not to do his own will, but to work with God. God's Cause is the sovereignty of the divine will, and the unveiling of the divine likeness, in humanity. The religious man believes that he is not dealing simply with details and with things; he is co-operating with the divine Spirit that speaks in his own soul; he is laboring with that hidden Reality which binds together and is working through the scattered circumstances of life. Therefore he relates his work, whatever it may be, to God. Having found his task, he

brings it into connection with the divine purpose. Thus he develops his best nature. He finds his life by losing it. Through self-forgetfulness he comes to self-realization.

The most menial duty assumes dignity when it is seen in its relationship to the kingdom of God. Drudgery becomes endurable, and even glorious, when performed in a lofty spirit, just as the common soldier knows that the routine of camp life is saved from meanness by the nobility of the Cause for which he is campaigning. Does not a man gain something exceedingly valuable when, ceasing to consider his work as a mere means of getting a livelihood, he labors under the inspiration of the thought that his daily toil is related to the good of humanity and the will of God? Simple things are thus consecrated and the ground upon which he stands becomes holy.

But the heart of religion lies deeper than any truth of which I have yet spoken. If Jesus came to the world and lived his beautiful life of obedience to God and of neighborliness to men, revealing those high moods which make life abundant in joy and power; if he held up

a vision of the kingdom of God and called upon men everywhere to make this the first object of their ambition ; if he did all this and nothing more, he would be a taskmaster harder than Moses. He would be a lawgiver with more elevated standards, intensifying the misery of our conscious shortcomings. But he revealed a gospel, and not simply ideals of character and conduct, so exalted as to be unattainable. The gospel is that God helps men to live the life they ought to live. The supreme service which Jesus rendered was to awaken in men a vivid and commanding consciousness of the ever-present grace of God. He made his followers feel that God cares for the most insignificant life. Walking one day in the market-place, he saw some sparrows exposed for sale. Two sparrows were sold for a farthing, but five were given for two farthings. The tiny creature was so valueless that in a trivial two-farthing trade it was thrown in as an extra. " Yet," exclaimed the Master, " not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God ! " The Father in heaven not only observes, he searches for the lost, as a woman sweeps her

house for a small coin, as a shepherd seeks a wandering sheep. The shepherd follows the foolish and helpless sheep, at the cost of privation and suffering, out into the night and into the wilderness. You will notice that the rescue does not depend solely upon the lost sheep hearing the voice of the shepherd and obediently following him back to the fold. The shepherd is strong and the way, leading o'er crag and torrent, is difficult. Christian art has been true to the heart of the gospel in representing the good shepherd carrying the lost lamb in his arms. In him is the power that seeks and saves. Or, to change the illustration: A sailor falls overboard in the high seas and the commander throws to him a life-line. If the drowning man will cling tenaciously to the line, he will be brought in safety to the vessel. But the current runs strong, the waters are cold, and his grasp is feeble. If his rescue depends upon his ability to cling to the life-line, the sailor is lost. But the commander does more than throw out a rope. He orders the lifeboat lowered, it draws near the struggling sailor, and the commander lays hold upon

him. Now, the salvation of the sinking man lies, not first of all in his purpose to save himself, it rests in the purpose and strength of the commander. He is saved because neither height nor depth can separate him from the might of the compassion which has taken him in its keeping. This crude illustration is to my mind an expression of the grace and glory of our religion. God, in his Son and in his Spirit, searches for his lost ones. At extreme cost to himself he lays hold of every willing life. It was Christ's nature to love men in their sins and to help men out of them; it is God's nature also. His is a love that will not let us go. Having loved his own, he will love them to the end. The hope of redemption is not secreted in the energies of the human will, but in the Everlasting Love and power that pities, and follows, and encompasses men with a perfect defense. Man's fidelity to God is only part of our religion. God's fidelity to man is its abiding hope and unspeakable glory.

There is a still more practical way of stating the work which religion does in remoulding broken and imperfect lives. Professor James

has described regeneration as a process by which "a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified, and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of a firmer hold upon religious realities." This is a forcible statement of the every-day achievement of religion. Men are aware that their natures are divided. The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit lusteth against the flesh. Christianity unifies the nature by bringing all its faculties into subjection to a Master. It takes men who are consciously wrong, and makes them consciously right with God and men, through repentance and the assurance of forgiveness. Inferior men are endued with power to conquer themselves and the hostile conditions of their lives. Men bitterly unhappy have been lifted into permanent moods of joy and serene courage. This wonder is the familiar story of every Bowery mission and of every living church. It is so common that it fails to attract attention. Science can explain the psychology of the change, but it cannot work the miracle. It can trace the process, but it cannot furnish the

power. Much less can it produce that knightly passion, so characteristic of men really regenerated, to spend and be spent in the service of others.

In drawing this discourse to a close, I wish to call your attention to a fact which is important for men of mature years to keep in mind. It is the prevalent opinion that youth is the period of life which is exposed to the gravest peril. If the young man can be gotten over the slippery paths of the early years, and be well settled in a profitable business, and in a comfortable home, then the safety of his life is assured. Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, he will bring forth good fruit in its season. But probably more men go wrong in the midst of the years than in early manhood, even as more ships go down upon the high seas than founder when sailing out of the harbor.

History sustains this contention. Consider how many of the kings of Israel failed in middle life. Saul in his young manhood was the glory of Israel; in the fullness of his strength he fell through self-will. Solomon

dedicated himself in youth to wisdom; in his later years he was a far-famed voluptuary. If many of the Roman emperors had died in middle life, they would have left names of imperishable honor. Benedict Arnold at twenty-one, in like circumstances, would have exclaimed with Nathan Hale, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." One of the most brilliant editors of the past generation began his career at Brook Farm. In his early life he was an idealist as stainless as Garrison or Phillips. After the Civil War he dipped his brilliant pen in the gall of bitterness to defend the most debased political machine of the day.

Literature teaches the same lesson. Dante gives us his own experience when he writes as the opening line of the "Divine Comedy"; "Midway in the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, where the right way was lost." Shakespeare at forty confronted those stern powers which determine destiny. Then he turned from lighter plays to the deep themes of the tragedies. His great characters were not young. Lear lost and found himself

in old age. The king in "Hamlet" murdered his brother in that period of life when the heyday of the blood is cool and waits upon the judgment. Macbeth and his lady would not have slain their king and guest in the more generous days of youth. Macduff reveals the cause of Macbeth's damnation.

"This avarice

Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
Than Summer-seeming lust."

Tennyson represents Gareth as easily conquering the Knight of the Morning Star, but the Knight of Noonday is overcome with more difficulty. The daily newspaper confirms the testimony of literature and of history. The forgers and defaulters of whom we read are not usually young men. The financiers whose unscrupulous practices have endangered the liberties of our institutions are men of ripened experience. Our Pharisees are seldom in the flush of youth.

Why do so many good men break down in the midst of the years? One reason is that the temptations of middle life are deadlier than those of early manhood. The sins of the

younger days grow out of the impulses of the flesh. They are born of hot blood and of immature judgment. The perils of middle life are of the spirit. They are less gross, but more reptilian and insidious.

These are the years of waning enthusiasm. Youth is generous and ardent, ambitious of glorious achievement. Young men are susceptible of moral appeal. By middle life one has learned how mighty is the pressure to bring one's ideals down to the dead level of character. He finds that to follow his highest conceptions of duty and honor involves constant misunderstanding and sacrifice. The price he is paying for righteousness appalls him, and he concludes to aim lower and be more comfortable. Moreover, the years have revealed his limitations. It is a serious moment when a man realizes that he is only an atom. Then he confronts the temptation to give up lofty endeavor and to look first after his own interests. It is a critical moment in the race of life when one loses his first wind. He is apt also to lose his enthusiasm and drop out of the running. But if he resolutely continues,

he soon taps a fresh reservoir of energy and presses on with vigor and joy. There is no more crucial period in life than the period when one's early enthusiasms are a spent force, and one is learning to fall back on the steady convictions of the spirit.

The fact that you and I are sober, industrious, and eminently respectable citizens in the maturity of our powers does not prove that in the essential qualities of manhood we may not be inferior to men of less reputable lives. We have passed creditably through the stormy period of youth, and there is little danger that we shall give way to the baser sensuous passions. But are we meeting the perils of middle life with equal valor? Are our ideals of personal conduct as lofty as they were twenty years ago? Are our standards of thought and action as elevated as then? Are we as responsive to the high calls of duty? Are we growing broader in vision, more sympathetic of heart, more consecrated in purpose? Or have we settled down? Are we on the march, or are we making ourselves generally comfortable? Are we pressing on towards a worthy goal, or

has the vision splendid faded into the light of common day?

Let me bring these familiar talks, of whose inadequacy I am all too conscious, to a close by an illuminating quotation from Schleiermacher, one of the most distinguished exponents of the new theology in the nineteenth century. The cardinal doctrine of this theology—the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the world—so filled his mind with rapture that he uttered these memorable words, which disclose the spiritual enthusiasm which may come to those who enter completely into the new light which has fallen upon the old faith: “Unfeebled will I bring my spirit down to life’s closing period: never shall the genial courage of life desert me; what gladdens me now shall gladden me forever; my imagination shall continue lively, and my will unbroken, and nothing shall force from my hand the magic key which opens the mysterious gates of the upper world, and the fire of love within me shall never be extinguished. I will not look upon the dreaded weakness of age; I pledge myself to supreme contempt of every toil which does not concern

the true end of my existence, and I vow to remain forever young. . . . The spirit that impels man forward shall never fail me, and the longing which is never satisfied with what has been, but ever goes forth to meet the new, shall be mine. The glory I shall seek is to know that my aim is infinite, and yet never to pause in my course. . . . I shall never think myself old until my work is done, and that work will not be done while I know and will what I ought. . . . To the end of my life I am determined to grow stronger and livelier by every act, and more vital through every improvement. . . . No event shall have power to disturb my heart; the pulse of my inner life shall remain fresh while life endures."

Such was the enthusiasm created in the heart of one of the earliest expounders of the new light, and such ardor and joy glows in the heart of every one who sees "truth enkindled along the stairway of the eternal palace."