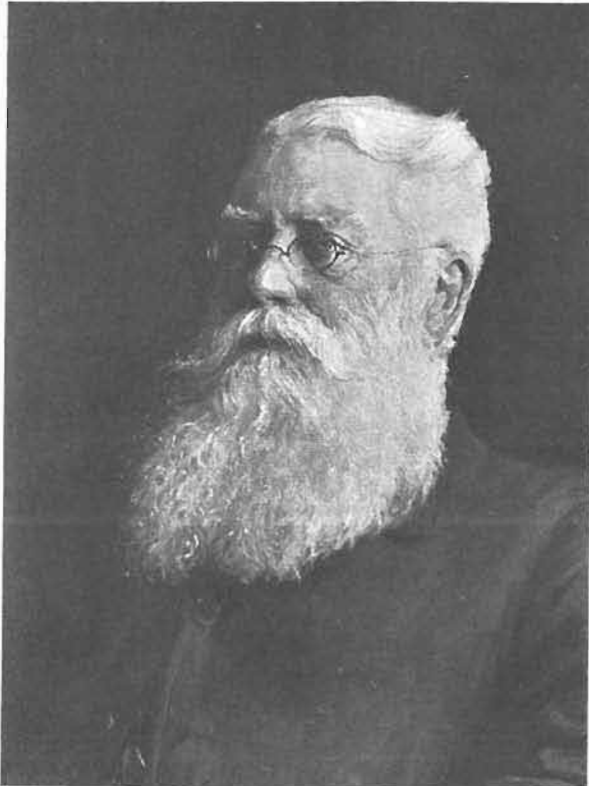
MEMORIALS
OF A
MINISTRY

Memorials of a Ministry

Sermons and addresses by
James Edwin Odgers M.A., D.D.



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J. Edwin Odgers.

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JAMES EDWIN ODGERS, M.A., D.D.

Some time Hibbert Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History,
Manchester College, Oxford

www.unitarian.org.uk/docs

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PREFACE

THIS volume is a gift to me from my brothers, sons, and daughters, who are publishing it on the occasion of my eightieth birthday, April 14th, 1923. In turn I dedicate it to those few old friends, survivors of the congregations to which I have ministered, who may have heard some of these sermons preached, and to whom they will be in truth memorials of my ministry among them ; also to the five dear friends who were fellow-students of mine at Manchester College between 1859 and 1865,—an early attachment which long years have confirmed and deepened. And further, I dedicate them to my old students, seventy-eight of whom have joined in sending me an address of congratulation on my birthday.

The various dates of these sermons will shew at once that they have been selected from the relics of a long ministry. That ministry began in 1865 when I went to Liverpool as curate to the Rev. John Hamilton Thom. Between that date and 1894, when I came to Oxford, I had been minister at Kendal, Bridgwater, the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth (Liverpool), and Altrincham. During these last two pastorates, from 1878 to 1891, I was Tutor and subsequently Principal of the Unitarian Home Missionary Board (now College), Manchester. So these sermons are voices from the past. I have made no effort to bring them up to date or prevent them from appearing now as by-gone or old-fashioned. They appear truly as memorials, and as such my family and my old friends will receive them.

As these old manuscripts have been read to me (for my blindness has prevented me from doing much by myself in the selection of them) I see that there is not a great deal

that can be called original in them. A man who has been engaged in teaching continuously as well as preaching cannot easily maintain a level of independent thinking or studied composition, and is often indebted for subjects of sermons to suggestions which appear quite casual. But I remember only two or three instances in connection with the sermons here presented. 'Two Talents' was certainly suggested by the title of a sermon by the late Bishop Phillips Brooks which I happened to see in a foreign hotel. 'Two or Three Berries' came to me from a sermon of my late friend Rev. Frank E. Millson of Halifax, and I remember that I owe to him the quotation from Jeremy Taylor which appears in it.

The review of my past years, to which the occasion of this publication has contributed much in the way of personal memories and associations, has added to the store of obligations to teachers, friends, and pupils which can be treasured but not counted. My warmest thanks are due to my brother, the Rev. J. Collins Odgers, who has transcribed these sermons from my manuscript, a work of no little difficulty, and has had most to do with their publication; and to my constant friend, the Rev. Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter, who has kindly read them in proof.

J. E. O.

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I.

Our Church Life:

Its Significance and Value.*

Toxteth—November, 1878.

I. Corinthians xvi. 13:—'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.'

IN taking my place here for the first time as stated minister of the Word of God in this venerable house of prayer, I am conscious of strangely mingled emotions. I return to contact with the active life of this great town after more than ten years spent in 'quiet resting-places.' From the hurry and anxiety of new occupations and surroundings, this Chapel, a haunt of ancient peace, calls on me for some testimony to those realities of faith which are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. I am taking a new departure in life; yet I am recalled to the scene of my first efforts as a minister—of my early disappointments in myself; and my early aspirations, still unrealised, my early resolves, still unfulfilled, come back afresh upon my mind, and make me 'falter where I firmly stood.' Yet I come back to friends on whose love and forbearance I have rested before, thankful to find so many living still to welcome me, and to honour me again with their confidence; and I cannot but thank God, and take courage.

In view of that relation to each other into which we enter to-day, I wish to say something concerning the value of our religious inheritance, the real significance of our position, and the duties and responsibilities which these entail upon us.

* The first sermon of my ministry in the Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, Liverpool.

'*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*'

In individual faithfulness, in the religious strength of each and every member—here and here only lies the possibility of success as a Church, of propagating Truth, of representing Christianity as a stable and beneficent reality. Reverse the order, and Christianity ceases to be an influence for good; it is but the name of a dying system. Over and over again it has been forgotten that there can be no germ, no root for a Church but in individual holiness, in the private and immediate relation of the human soul to God. And just so often has the system, which was to be the witness of truth and goodness, seen the perpetuation of lifeless form when all actual truth of conviction and devotion has fled, and heard the sound of holy words, seen the solemn round of pious ceremony, serving only as a screen for the utter deadness of spiritual life, nay worse, for the foulest corruption of living. The history of all religions,—of Christianity itself for centuries together—has shown that religious institutions may be a blight and a curse instead of a blessing; we see the Church,—instead of being the centre to which converge the hearts that are touched with religious emotion, the souls that amid the storms of earthly passion have a side ever open heavenward, seeking increase of strength from association with others, and finding in communion with their spiritual kindred the confirmation of that faith which faints and grows cold in solitude—instead of this, we see the Church, age after age, often serving as a hindrance rather than a help to the seeker after God. It represented, or professed to represent, rather the dispensations of God than the needs of man; it professed rather to bring God down to man than to raise man towards God. It affected to carry on God's moral judgment, judged, rated and acquitted in His name. It claimed kindred with heaven by ties of super-natural power, and then fearlessly outraged the sanctities, and even

the decencies of man. An impartial observer of the Church of the Middle Ages might conclude from what he saw,—and the conclusion would be confirmed by what he heard,—that Religion was something which in a mysterious way concerned God, but had no natural relation to man; that the services of the Church were, by some unaccountable means, for God's glory, but that devotion to them was hardly compatible with the dignity of manhood. He would see system at the height of perfection, system over-riding all human rights, because it claimed to be divine; uniformity everywhere, one church, one priesthood, one doctrine, one body—but where was the soul? The Church appeared to exist merely for the benefit of those who were themselves part of the system, portions of the ponderous machinery. But first a German monk, and then a German people, rose to the idea that Religion was not merely the Church's creation, or the priest's trade, but that it was solemnly and as in the sight of God, every man's business to have a religion for himself; that the individual conviction of God's action in the human soul (what Luther called Justification by Faith) was the true germ and centre of a real and living Church. Private judgment in doctrine was not long in following the assertion of individual conviction as the condition of Church membership, though the first Reformers were vehement in their opposition to this further reformation. This principle abolished, as they saw it would, all hope of external uniformity—nay more, of internal unity—in the Church. *Churches*, rather than *the Church*, articles of agreement, demands for just so much doctrinal consensus as might be deemed sufficient for practical co-operation, rather than authoritative settlements of doctrine such as Popes and Councils had put forth,—these were the new signs of the times. The idea, beautiful but still impracticable, of one all-embracing Church, one in possession of the one full truth, one in unity of purpose and of action, one in its sole claim upon

the hearts of all well-wishers to their race, lives only as a dream in the memories of the present. But the principle of the Reformation has done its great work, in conjunction with increased activity of thought in the minds of this century, and the demands of the soul, never so loud and incessant as at present, at once for truth and for freedom. The growth of religious independence has shown the power of the appeal which has been made to earnest minds of all shades of belief. Our land is covered with Churches and Chapels which have had for their ground and reason the longing of the soul for some fuller, heartier, religious life, or some higher, purer, teaching than had been found before. And so our Nonconformist churches are pledged to this position—that the need of the individual soul is the reason and foundation of the Church; that the longing for a more intimate relation of the soul with God Himself, and of the mind with Truth itself, is the ground of separation from other churches assuming to be catholic or national; that the devotion of the earnest heart, and the conscientious godliness of an earnest life, are the true conditions of the reception of God's spiritual gifts and consolations, rather than attention to formulary, or acquiescence in the supernatural methods of a sacramental system; that Christian men and women, joined in sympathy on the deepest, holiest, side of their common nature, in unity of aim, that aim the highest and most important, constitute the Church —not that the fact of belonging to a Church can constitute them Christians, or render possible or certain some favour of God which individual faith might not attain without it. As I understand it, this is the conviction to which we pledge ourselves as members of a Nonconformist body. And if this be the case, do we not at the same time pledge ourselves to something more than a mere attendance at services and sermons, something more than a Dissenting Conformity? Surely those who willingly confide in the judgment of an apparent majority in their religious matters, who acquiesce

in the teachings of a presumed authority, who suspend reason in order to avail themselves of supernatural means of grace, have a handle against us if we, who plead the bidding of duty as the ground of our isolation, have but heartless apathy, instead of fuller life, to show for our freedom; but petty discord, instead of hearty co-operation and forbearing charity, to show for our voluntary system; but a weak faith and a spirit of shallow criticism, instead of strong individual conviction in ourselves and reverence for the same in others, to show for our free services and our private judgment. It does not speak well for us if our religion disappears when we take it into our own hands. The poor dependent on the word and deed of his priest is nearer to deep and beneficial spiritual influence than many an arrogant asserter of independence, who prides himself in his dryness of emotion and the crushing irony with which he judges others. If we are content to rest where we are, in our little religious circles, thinking that our separation can suffice to make or to keep us pure in spirit and progressive in holy living, then is our position stultified by our own sloth and lifelessness. For the very ground of *social* worship is found in the conscious incompleteness of our individual being. The sense of want, the cry of our souls for fuller, freer development, for a close relation to God and the Truth, cannot be satisfied by the mere formation of fresh associations, or the mere variation of form and method in our services. When it has brought us hither, it must take us farther; or our Church will be not the satisfaction but the blighting of our religious aspirations and possibilities. If we come only to gratify our individual peculiarities of taste, only to insist on new creeds instead of old ones, only to propagate individual influence, nay, if we come only to say or to hear what appears to us to be higher truth than is elsewhere to be found—then has our Church done us grievous spiritual harm. It has led us, or allowed us, to exchange that need of the soul which

marks its life, for that self-sufficiency which is death. Our Church, while bearing witness to our individual wants, should also bear witness to our joyful willingness to take all that help which God can give us from the lives, the characters, the exertions, of others, towards their satisfaction. On that very side of our life where our own experience fails, and our faith is weak, God, who has led no two souls through precisely the same experience of trial and consolation, can give us through another's soul the help and comfort that we need. The fulness of the perfect man we fail to find in any *one*; God does not trace His image fully on any individual character; yet in religious intercourse and fellowship lies the highest opportunity of gathering together those separated lineaments of a divine beauty which appear here and there, giving, perhaps, to every soul under some aspect, a grace, a strength, a perfection, which is to some other new and strange. Some ray of divine light, which we have failed to catch, will shine on us,—some gleam of truth will cheer the way which seemed to us totally dark, if we, with mutual trust and charity, keep our souls open to the lessons which may flow from fellowship with our brethren, who have been led by other paths than ours. The supply of the deficiency of the one from the fulness of another is the great object of all social life; and in our Church-life it is only the readiness to give and to receive which can help us forward to the true object of such association, namely, the fuller revelation to us and in us of God, by bringing to a focus, as it were, all those varying and variously communicated characteristics by which He is apprehended in individual souls, and the increased fullness and richness of our lives which should result from knowledge thus widened and faith thus confirmed. And here, again, in the highest duty and possibility of a Church—the reflection in its collective body of that fulness of manhood, that completeness and sustained elevation of life, that uninterrupted contact with God

and manifold service of Him, which is not yet possible to the individual,—it is only by the faithful witness of each to that truth which God has given him to feel, by the ready helpfulness, the loving disposition, the sympathising heart of each, that Church-life can be made of real value to us. If these be absent, it becomes a mere deceit by the aid of which we persuade ourselves that we have, collectively and as a society, a religion, though religion be a reality to none, and its profession merely a snare to all. With each, then, in addition to the duties and responsibilities of a private sphere, lie the further responsibilities of a member of a body; in the watchfulness, the steadfastness, the manfulness, the strength of each one's faith lies the only hope that as a congregation we can witness a good confession, do a work which may be fruitful in lasting good, and, joined as members one of another, grow up in united progress into Him which is the head.

WATCH YE, then. If what we are is of importance not only to ourselves, but to others—if we have in us the possibility of affording to them help such as we little dream of, or giving them, as we often do, justification for a cold and close indifference by our own indolence and spiritual barrenness, let us awake to the true significance of that life which we live not to ourselves alone. Let not others look to you in vain for the helping hand and the cheering word; let not a single heart long in vain for that sympathy which every human being can have for every other, but of which, alas! our suffering and perplexed brother often finds us dry and poor. Watch, lest God's perpetually fresh revelations find your eyes closed and your souls shut; lest a spirit that might have opened to you a store of new and rich life, have roused in you possibilities of growth that may henceforth never wake again, should pass by you unnoticed, and, longing for communion, weeping secretly for lack of fellowship with some receptive soul, carry away with it a saddened experience of life, and a

fruitless wealth of thoughts that might have stirred the kindling life of others, and words that 'for lack of listeners were not said.' Watch, lest those duties of kindly benevolence and piety, which God places in the way of all, be left unnoticed, unfulfilled, while each one doubts whether it can be his business to step forward and meet them. Watch, for we know not how soon our means of earthly usefulness, our opportunities for faithful service of God on earth, may end.

STAND FAST IN THE FAITH.—It is far from my wish, as it was from Paul's, to enjoin or recommend any stiffness of doctrinal position, any self-satisfied unprogressiveness of thought or opinion. I come among you as one freeborn, one who has never accepted a doctrinal test, or given a doctrinal pledge as a condition of religious communion or ministerial function. In churches of ancient foundation like your own, tracing their history from the times of England's deepest and most honest religious life, representing in their origin a broad and abiding principle, not some small dogmatic point or dogmatic name, born, not of controversy, but of faith and freedom,—a freedom that has broadened slowly down to our time, and gives us the old home of faith, the sanctities of long association, for our worship to-day—in such was I bred, and of such alone have I been minister. I rejoice to be again a minister of the free word of God in a free church. Yet there is a faith as well as a freedom in which our Church bids us stand fast. Paul, in face of the differences which agitated the Churches of his day, makes in various forms this simple demand upon those whom he addresses—'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' I can but repeat his words in face of the perpetual doctrinal changes of our time. Be steadfast in fidelity to personal conviction, and never cease to respect that fidelity in another. Never let the times which should witness the strengthening of your faith, the outpouring of your heart's deepest emotion, the

bracing of every nerve of your inner life for warfare against the meaner passions of the world, find you forgetful of your need of personal religion, and fenced against the action of the spirit by a shallow mood of intellectual criticism. Never assume the mental attitude of an uninterested bystander while one speaks in this place or elsewhere of the deep realities of his personal feeling and experience. Never play at the battle of opinions; if what you read or hear appears to conflict with convictions you have hitherto held, search the matter to the bottom as best you can; leave not a doubt behind you of which you have not truly tried the strength in fair fight; avoid the fate of many an amateur theologian and controversialist, who has found to his final grief that while he was perpetually ready to tell or to hear some new thing, while he was busy with the oppositions of schools of thought, his own personal convictions, which he had neglected to build upon and strengthen progressively, had dwindled away and died, leaving him battling with words which had ceased to have direct and definite meaning for him. Whatever mental difficulties, whatever religious doubts and misgivings may await you, stand fast in this faith—that there is a Truth that may be yours; that an absolute and unquestioning fidelity to the truth which God has already revealed to us, which He has written for us in the constitution of the world, of our own nature, of our moral being, is the true and only condition of further revelation; that as we act and speak in accordance with the light that is in us, so shall God find us worthy of further illumination from His higher, fuller radiance.

QUIT YOU LIKE MEN, BE STRONG. Such personal sincerity as I have alluded to is the condition of a high and pure manhood. The faithful acceptance and use of God's discipline is the true means of converting the hot-headed, inconsiderate enthusiasm, the passionate partisanship, of youth into the calm, temperate, self-contained strength of the matured man. Curiosity, driven and tossed by

every wind of doctrine, either hardens into the coldness of scornful indifference, ever ready to disparage the warmth and freshness of conviction and character which it has foregone; or gives place to a dogmatism no less uncharitable, whether it take its stand on a mystical creed or on a blank negation. In a Church like this, where our membership does not prohibit intellectual activity from busying itself with even the first and fundamental principles of religious doctrine, the near relation which Freedom should bear to Truth can only be maintained by the honest avowal of deep conviction, by a brave and simple loyalty to that word of God which has come to us, by an energy of belief in our individual thought no less earnest than that which other bodies desire to display in their maintenance of the doctrines which belong to them by usage and tradition. We are not bound down to any dogmatic form by the founders of this Church, who in their own deep faithfulness were content to leave the truths they held divine to be modified, even transformed and obliterated, by the later conviction of their successors, trusting to the purifying influence of God's own Spirit to work in and through the minds and hearts of honest men of every generation. And just now, when in all religious bodies men are no longer content to abide by the dicta of the past, or to allow themselves to be legislated for by the theological authorities of the present—just now more than ever, Intellect is demanding what Faith it is that the Heart is embracing, and seeks to tabulate in words, to support or to impugn by varied arguments, the trust or the mistrust which has long perhaps been vaguely felt. And this Church bids you go on with the work of mental inquiry and judgment, not that you may square your results with the requirements of an established authority, or prove your right to come here by agreement with some accepted confession, but that you may be right with yourself and God; that the harmony of your own nature may be restored and perfected by the

consonance of your spoken word, your cherished thought, and your secret life; that neither of these may profess a faith which God has not truly given you to hold; that all alike may speak, and dare to speak, the word which He has given you, whether through observation, through reason, or through that deeper inward discipline the results of which these often seem powerless either to confirm or to weaken. We are here because we are pledged to this godly sincerity, TO QUIT OURSELVES LIKE MEN in the struggles which lie before Reason and Conscience, in the conflicts of faith and doubt, of resolve and temptation; to BE STRONG, not in the rigidity of an ancestral creed, or the tenacity with which we cling to traditional forms, not in the vanity of our knowing, or the apathy of our ignoring; but in the earnestness of our desire for truth, the purity of our thought, the honesty of our reflection, the power of our spiritual insight. This Church gives us nothing to save us from the need of this individual strength; if we can give to the Church the fruits of this sincerity and manly power, it will be strong in healthy and abiding influences. 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.'

II.

Jesus and Paul:

In relation to the World of their time.

Bridgwater.—January, 1870.

St. Matt. v. 8:—'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

Romans vii. 24:—'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

MOST modern writers on the origin of Christianity appear to have found it impossible to characterize the life and work of the first and second founders of Christianity without injustice to one or the other of them. To one investigator Jesus is but the idealized leader of a small sect within the circle of strict Judaism, and never meant to reach beyond it; the church of his followers is but a Jewish school of the narrowest sort, and Paul is the originator of a Catholic movement laying independently the corner-stone of the religion of humanity, bound to the name of Jesus only by some fine-spun threads of mystical doctrine, which was nevertheless all his own. To another, Paul is the arch-corrupter of that pure spring of simple morality and spiritual religion which had burst forth to be the waters of the world's life in the soul of Jesus; he dims its brightness by the infusion of sophistry, half Hebrew and half Greek, and when Christianity passes out of his hands the primitive teaching of the Gospel is transfigured into the casuistical jargon of the schools. In both these results of enquiry we detect the 'falsehood of extremes.' True it is that there is a sharp contrast between the life and temperament of Jesus and of Paul, but only such as was necessary for the spread of that spiritual religion which was the moving influence in each.

The poem of ideal life which spoke in the few years and in the few recorded words of Jesus needed to be reduced to hard argumentative prose when it came in contact with the struggling life of its age. Think for a moment of the conditions of his life and his inner development—the child early taught the 'wondrous things of the law,' yet so far removed on those hill slopes of Galilee from the pedantry of the schools which blinded the sight and cramped the mind, that his fresh pure eyes could see wondrous things of God in the nature around him, and he could take into his heart all the sights and sounds of country life. The lily leaves of Nazareth still scent the words of Jesus like the pale rose leaves that drop out of some yellow Testament, leaving their odour behind them. Retirement and frequent solitude, simple habits of village life, the homely reading of the law, and the familiar exposition in the village synagogue, favoured the natural and silent unfolding of the soul through quiet days 'bound each to each by natural piety.' Life was simple, duty was natural, the soul was open to the clear light of heaven, conscience rejoiced in a pure uprightness, memory could call up the past with no more regret than is sweet in thoughtful retrospect, while conscious religion made the scene around, and the spirit within, instinct with God. Why was it not so everywhere and always? An impulse calls him forward to tell to others that however lots may vary, the soul's peace may be the same; that the highest relation of man to God is the truest, nay the natural one; he goes forward to the world of men to shew to them the truth he feels, to open his own soul to them, and show to them a kingdom of heaven already possible to those of humble spirit, and a spiritual vision already the blessing of the pure in heart. The shadows of the unknown world cast a darkness over his soul, and for two years he laboured in the cause of the heart's truth against the world's falsehood, of simplicity against the complications of society and the cunning of its

leaders. And through all he proved a truth that this century needs to learn—that there is a strength in purity, a power in simple innocence, a power of action and a power of endurance, a wisdom in impulse that outwits the long-headed shrewdness of the man of the world. He refused to avail himself of the rage of the people, or to lend himself to the plans of the ambitious politician. He forfeited the enthusiasm of the one, and the support of the other; he went simply forward on his own way, refusing to speak any word he did not feel to be the truth of God. His great tribulation came, and the shadow of death lay thick upon him; he met his agony and cruel death, not with that abnegation of feeling, that strong affectation of indifference which the Pagan world delighted to honour, with which a selfish pride had as much to do as mental elevation. He did not affect to despise the world he loved so well; he did not speak contempt of those men whom he had found so wavering and so weak. To give up his work when so little had been done, this was the hardest trial of all, and yet it was God's will. Such minds never know how much they do; memory leaves little record of conscious effort, and the seeds of influence they sow are not of the sort that come up in a night. Yet such souls have the deepest effect on others, though it be unknown to the giver and recipient alike. The life that gives us a nobler ideal of life enriches at once our whole nature, it reveals a higher God, a better best, a purer holiness, a stronger soul than we have felt before. Life is thenceforward on a higher level, and the whole scenery of being is unconsciously changed. And so it was with those among whom Jesus had moved: he whose word had been their law, whose strength had been their support to an extent they only truly realized when he was lost to them, 'in whose transparent soul the remoter lights of God had been by them spiritually discerned.' Their old life could be theirs no longer; a higher excellence, a profounder sanctity beckoned

them forward still. The old home in Galilee had lost its sweetness for the disciples; old forms and memories haunted the lake-side, and now the calm voice that had blessed their toil was still, they laboured with only half a heart; and so they went up to Jerusalem again, and there in kindly social life they kept alive those recollections which were their common treasure, and gained strength to speak to others of their common hope, while with wistful eyes they waited on for the 'times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.'

But what was all this to that dead and worn-out world, to which Palestine was hardly recognised as belonging—the world besotted with vice, where nation and prince rushed from folly to folly as if trying to forget that ruin must come? It had no ears for a story of Jewish life, it had no tears for just one act of tyranny. The village history will never reach the heart of the busy town; there is too deep a gulf between the order of ideas here and there. The story is too shadowy—a glimpse of a high ideal, a gracious presence that came and went, a memory on which the speaker would always dwell, but to which he cannot give form and shape enough to quite arrest the hearer—another marvel from the East, the home of theophany and miracle. I doubt if the true history of Jesus, had it reached the ears of a contemporary inquirer from a disciple's lips, would have made more impression than this. And to the ordinary mind of heathendom the natural life of innocence, the free development of the healthy soul amid congenial influences, was a thing so unknown that the story would probably have made no impression at all for want of some ground of common feeling. The air of the Galilean mountains was too thin and pure for lungs habituated to the smoke and foulness of heathen city life. But suddenly there arose one in whose life the hearing of that story had been a turning-point, to whom that vague ideal had settled down into a deep reality, and supplied a long-felt want; whose faith

in God, whose hope in man, had been born again from the moment that he found a reality in answer to his own thought of God's immanent presence in the holy soul, of the power of divine life in man, and found that reality not merely in the life of the departed Jesus, but in the life which he had kindled in his followers who could die but could not be disloyal, and had but one answer to that tribunal Paul had served, 'Whether it is right to obey God rather than men, judge ye.' Paul could urge that the influence of Jesus might be to others what he had felt it to be to him. He could say to the world 'Thus was I, and thus am I.' And he came before it not as an impracticable ideal; there was nothing sublime in his history or address. He had simply to speak that which he knew. He came simply as a struggling, toiling man who had given his energy and life to the service of a truth he felt, and laboured all for that. A man fervid, impassioned, impatient, carrying his life in his hand, and only fearful lest it should not be long enough to do all he wishes; fiery and vehement in speech, with no time for eloquence, only caring that it should be plain; the cultivated Corinthians despised him on this account, as he tells us himself: 'his bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible.' No wonder his bodily presence was weak, shrunken with watchings and fastings and imprisonments, scarred with scourging, bent with bodily pain, his 'thorn in the flesh'; the fire of his mind could not even find expression in those dim sore eyes whose sight had failed him ever since that stroke on the Damascus Road, and made him so bad a penman. An adventurous broken life was his; as a youth bred in a town favoured by Augustus, proud of the Roman name, and instructed, I doubt not, in Greek philosophy and rhetoric, though a Jew; then sent to Jerusalem to study the law of the greatest of Pharisaic teachers save one, Gamaliel—in the first burst of enthusiasm, intolerant of any infringement of the Jewish theocracy, and willing to maintain the

authority of the Sanhedrim to the utmost; hence a violent persecutor of the Christians; then a recluse struggling with his old theology, fitting the truth he feels about Jesus into the philosophy he holds—no sudden conversion, but a settling of his mind for those two long years in Arabia of which he tells us; then an apostle, and you have heard the story of that life—'in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings, hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness'—a life strange in its vicissitudes, now worshipped as a god, now imprisoned as a blasphemer, arguing to Athenians from their own poets, surrounded by the glories of the 'eye of Greece,' or speaking to the barbarous people of Melita on the shore, fresh from another wreck; in one place received in the synagogue as a Rabbi of eminence, in another, teaching in the style of a recognised Greek philosopher in the school of one Tyrannus.

It was not so much the life of external change and struggle which this wonderful man led, which made him the natural and fit apostle for the world of his day, as his life of internal vicissitude and contest. There was in him no steady and harmonious refinement of spiritual life, proceeding by such uninterrupted growth that, as in the case of Jesus, the result could seem to a later generation only explicable by the supposition of a commencement in advance of human attainment. In him was an old self to be conquered, an old life to be left, a struggle always present and never quite complete, a faith and a hope for ever reaching forward, but never able to whisper the comforting word that the end is already attained. There were the artificial restraints of that law from which he had painfully emancipated himself, which had in his early life made turbid the waters of pure morality, producing a perpetual self-suspicion, and an artificial code of moral judgments. There were the scars of that internal warfare between the sin which came by the law (*i.e.* was branded by the law as disobedience, and felt

as a transgression) and the will to which the law gave no strength but rather imparted vacillation and weakness. Then all those lower propensities of human nature which take advantage of internal conflict to assert their claims, and overleap all artificial moralities, transgress all rules of conduct, can only be subordinated and harmonized by the true kingship of the soul, and until that is attained appear to serve an independent power—what Paul calls the law of the flesh in his members. Hard, indeed, if the harmony of life be once broken to restore it again; hence the deep reality of the conflict which often takes place in souls which seem to others to have passed beyond all struggle, and whose tried goodness seems to us to entitle them to internal peace. There is a reality in that body of death with which Paul struggled, in that devil with which Luther and Bunyan fought. The man finds that the passionate and impulsive side of his nature is not subject to his better will, that while, as Paul, he delights in the law of God after the inward man, there is another law in his members bringing him again into captivity to the law of sin. There is still one half of his nature which seems unsanctified and rebellious, and the whole man cannot present himself and his service as an offering to God, when a dead-weight of conscious disobedience drags down his soul in the moments of its highest aspiration.

Paul bears incessant witness to a great fact of human experience, the permanent weakness introduced by an old life that wars against the new, or even if the warfare be over, and as Paul would say the old man is dead with the lusts thereof, nevertheless it hangs, a body of death, upon the new, a trial to faith, a clog to aspiration, conveying a perpetual warning that the dead past has not buried its dead, but that it is ever present with you. And in that sense of sin upon which Repentance laid the foundation of newness of life, is found not as at first the great impulse toward God, but now the source of compunction, a diffidence

and almost a despair, which seems to keep back the soul from upward progress, and for ever bar at least the higher heights of holiness against the struggles of a spirit that bears the world's old mark impressed deep upon it. The dark shadows of the world seem to chase away the lights of heaven; and not merely in his outlook upon the age does he see the world with all its wisdom not knowing God—the deep gloom of long alienation from Him—the contented blindness of the foolish heart that is darkened—but in the inner depths of experience he finds the same sad alienation of the human from the divine, the carnal mind that is enmity against God, the natural man that comprehendeth not the things of God, the memory, association, habit, the second nature, even more godless than the first, interposing between the spirit and God the thoughts and usages of a life that never had acknowledged Him—and laying the cold weight of ungodly fact upon the longing for better things. Paul's words, full of deep and living meaning, passed on to be formulated and fixed in theological systems by Augustine and Calvin. They have often cast deep shadows over the nature of God as well as the nature of man. It was only the intense and lurid light of a life like Paul's that could cast such shadows, and it is only in the light of such a life that the words can be read aright. And in countless other lives the words have represented deep reality, lives like his, like Augustine's, Bunyan's, John Newton's, where there had been the great break never quite healed, the gulf between an actual and a past life, dead but following ghostlike into every depth of thought or experience.

The religion of nature, of the pure and manly heart, is and ever has been the religion of Jesus. The theology of the convert, of the brand plucked from the burning, is and has ever been, prevailingly Pauline. When reformation has been begun amid the self-chastisements of remorse, and gloomy retrospect and self-mistrust rob life of its

sweetness and its light, man is apt to throw forward upon the very face of God, upon that creation which is His vesture, the bars of deep shadow which really lie only across his own soul. He cannot believe that God can forgive him, when he cannot excuse himself. He cannot believe that God is all Love when to himself his life is so unlovely. In the last resorts of communion with God the sense of unworthiness and impotence has been present, and even in the deep consecration of the will distrust of self silences the words of ready faith. Jesus beholding with open face the glory of spiritual life feels the Divine Will, the absolute purpose of God, swaying every faculty, and with glad surrender acknowledges it as the law of life, and rejoices in the consciousness of an abiding Sonship. Paul can only trust that God in mercy will take what he is too weak perfectly to give, that a grace not his own will accept his contrition though his will be weak and his life disjointed; aspirations rise from the great deeps of his soul not with gladness and confidence, but as with mighty sobs from some dumb despair. Neither the devotion nor the consolation seems to come from his own strength, and he says: 'The Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered' (Romans viii. 26). And he can say to others—only consecrate your will, and the rest shall be added unto you; you cannot be perfect, nor can I; you cannot keep the whole law, nor can I; your life is a broken struggle, so was mine; you are weak, I am weaker; yet can I do all things, for in answer to my deep need, in response to my cry of anguish, to my wail of impotence, I have heard the voice that said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee'; by that grace of God I am what I am.

Jesus standing on the summit of spiritual life, erect beneath the sunshine of divine approval, catches on his face and raiment the heavenly light and is transfigured while

we gaze, and through the parted clouds we seem to overhear the benediction of paternal love. Paul, feeling after the divine mercy and compassion, can only turn in sorrow from the dimness of his past struggles and bow in conscious weakness at the foot of 'the great world's altar stairs that slope through darkness up to God.' Yet do the broadening glories of the holy light strike bright upon him too. His eye through tears looks upon the crown that is laid up for him against that day; he knows in whom he has trusted, and in answer to his struggle and his prayer, on him too falls the blessing both of God and man.

III.

The Way of Beth-shemesh.

Toxteth.—October, 1880.

I. Sam. vi. 7-12:—'Now, therefore, make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and take the ark of the Lord and lay it upon the cart, and send it away, that it may go. . . . And see, if it goeth up by the way of His own coast to Beth-shemesh, then He hath done us this great evil; but if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened to us. And they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh.'

SO these Philistines thought that if Jehovah directed these kine so that they took His sacred ark in the way towards His own land, it would be a sign that He cared for its recovery, and hence they might attribute the evils that had happened to them to His resentment at their retention of it. They settled beforehand what they would take to be a sign of His intervention, and when it actually happened they were sure that their surmise was correct, and knew they were right in attributing their misfortunes to the immediate action of Jehovah. Both the idea and the procedure were perfectly natural and consistent with the old thought as to the manner of divine intervention in human affairs which runs through the most various religions, and gives rise to the most various rites and forms in our time as in days of old. Mankind, unable to take its judgment on a particular point any farther on any principle which may gain a general recognition, narrows the issues down to as few as may be, and leaves the final verdict with God Himself, trusting that He will give an unmistakable sign. Hence the sacredness of the casting of lots, of the

condemnation or acquittal shewn by the ordeal, the expectation that God would avenge the innocent and point out the guilty in that Wager of Battle which was, I suppose, the origin of modern duelling. But it is a wider and by no means a bygone conception of religion which says, 'If such and such a thing happens we shall see in that the finger of the Most High, while any other issue we shall be safe in regarding as only chance.'

We can match that story of the sacred ark very closely from the legendary history of our own land.

In the days of Cnut, Tofig surnamed the Proud, a Dane, was Sheriff of Somerset. At Leodgarsbury, on the top of the pointed hill which gave to the place the Norman name of Montacute which it still bears, was found a cross which was thought to have the power of working wonders. So they were minded to set it up in some great minster and they put it in a cart drawn by oxen to take it away. But whither? God should shew by directing the oxen. So they named aloud Glastonbury, Britain's holiest earth which is within a day's journey, but the oxen did not stir. Then they named the rival shrine of far-off Canterbury, and then other sacred spots all over England, but still the oxen did not move. They they named other places at random, and at last at the mention of Waltham in Essex, where there was no church, but only a hunting seat in a wood belonging to Tofig, the oxen at once set off. So to Waltham they came, and Tofig built a church over this cross at Waltham and set two priests to minister there. The repute of the wonder-working cross grew and spread, and when Tofig's son was deprived of his lands they came into the possession of Earl Harold, Godwin's son, who built there a great church with endowments for twelve canons. Around it grew the town of Waltham Holy Cross. The canons of Waltham followed Harold to the fatal field of Senlac and brought back his body to be laid in the church which he had built.

I have said that the conception of Divine action which such stories represent is by no means entirely bygone and outgrown. In spite of all that people say and hear and occasionally think of the God in whom they live and move and have their being, they consciously or unconsciously divide the experience of their lives into two great sections. One is the ordinary course of things, the tolerably uniform experience of life from day to day, in which their own fixity of habit, their own ability to get along in a round of business or duty, which is much the same from year to year, makes them look for nothing Divine, because they have ceased to look for anything exceptional; without intending to be irreligious, they are content to regard the accustomed course of events and activities, pleasures and grievances as simply neutral and colourless, as of no significance at all in respect of the religious beliefs they profess, or the religious duties they acknowledge; their very belief in God dies away into the creed of the sceptical Jews 'The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil' (Zeph. i. 12). If He does not draw nigh unto them, and make Himself felt, neither do they draw nigh unto Him, or feel after Him if haply they may find Him. They do not expect to find God, and they do not. But no man's experience, I suppose, is wholly one of habit and routine. He has, whether he ever discloses them or not, tales that he could tell if he chose of sudden and strange breaks in the uniformity of his life, of baffled expectations, of strange and awful pauses when things did not follow one another in their wonted course, of anxieties that revealed and stirred hitherto unfathomed depths in his nature, of times when his life appeared at once more solemn and momentous and yet in his achievement more empty and futile than ever before. On many of these occasions he has had, he knows, an uneasy feeling that God who has hitherto been on the outside of his life, is drawing inward, that the Presence he has felt behind him is inevitably meeting him face to face.

And yet, as he reverts (and he does not often revert) to these occasions in the memory of after years, he is apt almost to rally himself for having felt so solemnly here and there. It was not really the Lord's doing, it was a chance that happened to him. But there are some occasions which he cannot thus lightly explain away. Whether the issue was joyful or sad, it seems to him to have been a kind of special intervention in blessing or in thwarting. In his utter powerlessness he was brought nearer than ever before to the recognition of a stronger hand, and a Supreme Disposer. Perhaps this moment or that will live for ever in his memory as one of unexpected answer to words of unfamiliar prayer, or of not wholly unexpected punishment from which he knew, against his will, that he had no right to beg for an escape. But these, which are probably the most solemn associations of the man's life, are not allowed to have any power of interpreting the flat and unexciting intervals between, in which he has seen no God. He keeps them in the background as superstitions, in which however he cannot but believe, but which are probably based, he thinks, on experiences so personal and unique that another would not understand his feeling with regard to them. And thus the deepest and most far-reaching bond of human sympathy, the solemn side of life on which all souls may come into contact of heart with heart, because they have alike drawn near to God, is set aside, while we all combine to pretend that our experience is to the effect that God is in heaven and we on earth, and there is no voice, nor communication, nor sound as of anyone that answers.

There is a constant analogy, and a closer one perhaps than we may be aware of, between our conceptions of the action of God in Nature and of His action in humanity; our thought of His relation to us is largely coloured by our idea of His relation to the world and the course of things outside us. The days when nature bends to make way for miracle are the days when human wisdom

is superseded by immediate revelations of the Divine, manifested upon the lips of babes and sucklings. To the psalmist, to whom the uttermost parts of the sea or the shades below the earth could but reveal God's inevitable presence, the besetting Spirit was one that knew his thoughts afar off, and the unspoken words upon his tongue. To the philosopher who would knit man and Nature together into the being of one mighty World-Soul, the laws of Nature represent the economy of the Universal body, while the efforts of the human intellect are ripples upon the surface of the Eternal Thought. A later age that finds the Universe all material, finds Man all material too, looks upon the world and not only finds no God but 'finds no need of that hypothesis'; turns to man and weighs his brain, but finds nothing in its anatomy or its psychology about a soul. And quite apart from theory knowingly adopted, the man who sees in Nature no suggestion of things unseen and eternal, who can take in as much of her beauty as is for his own satisfaction, but never with the faintest perception of those strange and far-away graces and meanings which suggest to another pathos and yearning, self-judgment and self-renunciation, never a tinge of the 'thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears'—such a man is apt to find, or to make, his life merely mechanical, and his experience, though satisfactory to his contented egotism, being just exactly what he expected, is barren of any deeper thought, unconsecrated by any more solemn presence than his own. And when we come to estimate the intellectual and practical results of an absolute Atheism, its saddest result—that which we have a right to point out and characterize, while we refrain from judging another on the ground of merely speculative belief or disbelief—is found in a mean estimate, a degraded view, of human life—its capabilities, its motives, its aims. Cut off the ideal sanctions, banish its visions of the Infinite, deny that its moral aspirations represent any attraction towards a real perfec-

tion, make its conduct to depend merely on the chance of getting enjoyment without incurring physical pain, and you erect successful selfishness into a standard, and brand self-sacrifice as folly. Hence the tone, either supercilious or brutal, in which contemporary atheism speaks of man, save only in those cases where there is an undertone of pathos, due to the memory of hope extinguished and faith foregone.

But the more scientific modern view of life is not atheistic, far from it; but it is waiting to have its religious construction put upon it. It reads human history, and refuses any longer to see there the age of miracle and revelation, and ever thereafter the dimness of heaven closed and light withdrawn. It looks on Nature and fails to see adequate evidence of a period of spasmodic creation, followed by ages of mere destiny; it knows no such contrast as that between a freak of causal intervention and a long cycle of mere chemistry and physics. It says in each case, 'Nay, the law that is, was; the force that was, is.' And as it applies the same doctrine of continuity to the life of our day, it seems to many religious minds in this, even more than in the other cases, to be abolishing the Divine for ever. Yet as to the nature without us we have learned our lessons, and can, when science teaches us, respond that her testimony of constancy is more beautiful than the old thought of rupture and interference, that the daily miracle of the sunrise is more divine in our eyes than the story that the sun once stood still over Ajalon; that the annual marvel of returning foliage and flowers speaks more to our hearts than the story how Jehovah once planted a garden in Eden. And turning to human history, scientific observation marks the lines of progress, notes the cycles of recurring change, the strength of growing national character, the modifications introduced by circumstance, the action and reaction of social forces, refuses to allow that the Jew and the Christian are theological objects, all other men

merely anthropological, preaches the gospel of a wider Church than Christianity has often heard of since Paul declared on Mars' Hill that God had made of one blood all nations of men, and produces from all quarters likenesses and counterparts to balance all claims of exclusive possession of truth. And does our life of to-day remain untouched, unenlightened, by this interpretative spirit? Are we still drawing our capricious distinctions and saying 'Jehovah hath done this great thing,' and again, 'This is a little thing; this is only a chance that hath happened unto us'? In countless cases we have accepted part of the teaching and no more. We have probably—so far as our theories go—discarded what used to be called the doctrine of special providence. We may have persuaded ourselves that the best we can expect is that God's providence will work out right on the whole, that He has to take this and that together, and though our hearts may bleed, though our turns may come for woe and wailing, still the balance will be pretty fair in the long run, and some end, generally commendable, will be in the main attained.

I do not know whether men and women find comfort in this; I do know that some of them bravely and perseveringly try to do so. I can draw no distinction between special and general in the Infinite, nor can I believe that such language of human limitation can represent any fact in God's relation to man. We do not know what are the little things and what the great in His eyes; we do not even know until afterwards what are the great things and what the little in our lives and in our characters, what are the great opportunities, the great responsibilities, the great trials and temptations; we learn them afterwards because they have been to us of great moment, of great joy or of great shame, according as we have, or have not, taken them aright. Think how chance, eliminated from the world of nature, is being banished too from our theories of human life, how all royal roads and miraculous short-cuts

are ploughed up in the field of history, how the study of the laws of heredity, association and transmission is introducing sequences of cause and effect into what used to be considered the purely chance-endowments of human genius and individuality. And must our life become all un-divine because here, too, we are under the reign of law? Nay, here, too, the highest reading, not the lowest, is the true one. The tides of the spirit are intermittent in their flow, the hours of our keenest insight into the real facts of life and its significance are few and far between, but we need to let these teach us that as we know that in the joys, the sorrows, the trials, the shames which open our eyes to truest vision, nothing is chance, nothing is oversight, all is meaning, speaking, thrilling us with unwonted sympathy, breaking us with corrective self-judgment, waking us to new self-determination, so it is with all. But our eyes are holden, we do not see the full significance of all; we have part knowledge, as we are able to bear it. We learn little by little, but what we learn is at once the knowledge of God, and the knowledge how to live.

There are many types of piety with which I wish never to be out of sympathy. But none is so dear to my own soul as that trust, at once simple and profound, which finds in the Infinite surrounding us not the unwelcome limitation, the recoil of baffled powers, but the sense of support, the home-feeling in which Faith lives and has its being. I find it in the deep tone of the Psalmist's joyous confidence that he cannot flee from God's presence, or pass beyond the reach of His embracing Spirit. I see it in its most familiar type in the manly piety of Doddridge,* rejoicing that the eye of God sees through and through the daily round of duty and of patience, and lifting in return the steadfast glance of a happy courage. It touches me in

* Doddridge's hymn beginning 'To Thee, my God, my days are known' is an expression of the simple faith in which I wish to live and die.

the calm restfulness of Emerson's feeling that the little life of man is deep embosomed in the ultimate nature of things, and that the issues of the individual soul are not attenuated and minimised, but invested with some truer dignity, wrought to some nobler end, by the thought that there is ' no great and no small to the mind that maketh all.' It brings me back with a new understanding to the faith of Jesus, that there need be no loneliness to the solitary soul in that wide domain of love wherein the joys and sorrows of all life are not unmarked by Him who cares for the lily of the field and notes the sparrow's fall.

IV.

Sincerity.

Toxteth.—1880.

Ecclesiasticus v. 11 :—' Let thy life be sincere.'

THE book from which my text is taken is one of the most interesting remains of the later Jewish literature. It is the work of a conservative Palestinian Jew at the beginning of the second century, B.C. The author, as the prologue tells us, 'did imitate Solomon, and was no less famous for wisdom and learning.' The book was written originally in Hebrew, and translated by the grandson of the writer, who bore the same name as himself, into Greek, in the year 132 B.C. This was done in Alexandria probably ; and the book thus translated into the language used by the Jews settled there, was, as Dean Stanley says, a recommendation of the theology of Palestine to Alexandria. Its publication there probably drew from the Greek-speaking Jews, already tinged with Greek speculation and Platonic philosophy, a reply which we have in the work called ' The Wisdom of Solomon,' which is, conversely, the recommendation of the theology of Alexandria to Palestine.

The practical wisdom and shrewdness of observation which characterize the book are sufficiently seen in the chapter before us. A modest and yet self-respectful bearing in society and conversation could not be better described and enforced. But this little sentence—' and let thy life be sincere '—is not found in many manuscripts, and it has been doubted whether it ought to stand in the text. I fancy the reason of the suspicion attaching to it

must be this: it seems almost out of place where it stands; it goes deeper than the context, deeper than the connection seems to require; 'Know your own mind and consistently speak it' is the main precept; where your mind is not made up, listen with care to all that bears upon the question in hand, but do not be ready to venture immature opinions. In the author's own words—'Be steadfast in thy understanding, and let thy word be the same. Be swift to hear (and let thy life be sincere) and with patience give answer. If thou hast understanding, answer thy neighbour; if not, lay thy hand upon thy mouth.' Now here I can imagine that the author was going to say—'Be swift to hear, and sincere in your own speech'; but that the idea struck him that sincerity in *speech* was really nothing by itself; sincerity must be all in all, or not at all. 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Only a *life* which, like the speech he has been commending, is steadfast and the same throughout, can furnish the truthful and consistent word. If your speech is to represent your meaning, if it is not to be disturbed by eagerness to make a favourable impression upon the listener, if it is not to be the futile attempt to be even with others in conversation, when you really have nothing to say; of if, on the other hand, your words are not to display impatience of differences of opinion, or discourteous indifference to things which are of interest to others, it must be the outcome of a regulated system in your inner life, the parts of which are accustomed to work faithfully together—the mind to know itself, to respect its own tried and legitimate convictions, to be fully aware of its own short-comings and ignorances—the heart to regard conviction in others with respect, and to combine the modest service of truth with that Christian charity which is slow to attribute frivolous or wilful error to those who oppose it—the speech to faithfully reflect the conclusions of intellect, rather than to give currency to borrowed or hastily formed opinion—to call things by

their right names, and not to call sweet bitter, or bitter sweet—to testify quietly and unobtrusively to the verdicts of the intellectual and the moral judgment, and at the same time to avoid the unkindness of sarcasm or the light triumph of superiority in word-fencing. Yes, the sincere speech can only reflect what is behind it. Sincerity is destroyed directly the speech is a bit better or a bit worse than the life within. Like the hands upon the clock's dial-plate, it not only tells a story, true or untrue, of time as it goes on; it tells at the same time its story of the accurate or inaccurate fitting, the steady or unsteady working, of wheels within wheels behind it. The son of Sirach is right. 'Let thy speech be sincere' would have been scarcely half a precept. 'Let thy *life* be sincere' goes straight to the mark.

Now I think there is a mistaken conception abroad as to sincerity of speech, which needs to be corrected by reflection as to the sincerity which should pervade the whole life. People are sufficiently agreed in condemning in public speech or in private conversation that which is merely plausible, that which is obviously intended to produce an impression favourable to some private end of the speaker, or to give listeners the idea that he is either more learned, or more obliging, or more in agreement with them than he really is. Public men are judged severely on this point; and this is natural, because their public conduct is a thing which is before the gaze of all, and may be compared with their political professions when we like. And in private society too, we resent anything that looks like a taking advantage of social occasions to enlist a kind of popularity. The well-being and comfort of social circles depend upon an understanding of equality—an equal right to give and take in the interchange of talk or civility; the liking and the deference are not to be sought as ends in themselves. Honour will come where honour is due in the long run. People resent an unwarranted profusion of kindness, a

vast profession of interest in them, as they resent groundless conceit; and this is the form of insincerity which usually rises in their minds when they hear the word. They have in recollection instances in which elaborate expressions of sympathy sounded hollow, offers of help evaporated into mere words, and courtesies died away into mere forms just when a kindly greeting or an outstretched hand would have been a comfort and a support. And every now and then they say, 'Let us have done with conventionalities which do not mean kindliness, and acquaintances that ape the language, but have nothing to do with the spirit, of friendship.'

This is natural, but on the other hand, some alarm is naturally felt at the sincerity which those who profess to be in revolt against a sham cordiality or an artificial social behaviour may be disposed to adopt or to advocate. For often, in the name of truthfulness, they would banish the usual forms of politeness, and in fear lest they themselves should be supposed to be more friendly than they are, they spread an air of discomfort and mistrust around them. Some seem inclined to perpetually test their own strength of mind by seeing whether they have courage to utter, in season or out of season, what they sometimes call 'a few home truths'; while others test their friend's temper pretty severely in a variety of ways, apparently for no other purpose but to see whether their relation is real friendship or only what they call conventionality. How much pitiless, merciless, heartrending rudeness and insult has been poured forth with such preface as this: 'Now I am a plain man, and I speak my mind, and as a friend I must tell you'—and so forth! It may be the crudest opinion or the merest prejudice, but you are to take it as the truth and the whole truth, simply because it is what you did not suppose that anybody with any natural kindliness of disposition—to say nothing of any one claiming the sanction of friendship—would utter in your presence.

Such instances dispose us to add to the Litany the poet's supplication, 'Save, oh save me, from a candid friend.' And yet these good people are surprised that those who still hold them as friends should find pleasure in any other society; they wonder that those who can enjoy the advantage of their plain speaking and free criticism should ever mix with those who are more reticent; and would make their own antipathies into laws for all their friends. They do not go into society themselves, they say; they rail against its shams, conventions and hollownesses, and marvel that other people do not also leave this society and come to seek that friendship with which they honour a few, whom also, if they are permitted, they rule with a rod of iron. But all their talk of society as an institution, or a thing that you can alter by law, or preaching, or grumbling, is pure nonsense. I am not speaking of society in the abstract, or in the sociologist's sense, but of the people you and I know and live among. People who have interests or acquaintances in common will naturally see each other and talk to each other from time to time. That is society as we know it. Its tone is not elevated, its judgments are not wise—no, but if those who could correct these things remain on pedestals at home, these things will not be corrected. This kind of society must not be supposed or allowed to supersede Friendship. It is the medium through which the atoms that may become attracted into friendship, are free to move in obedience to each other's attraction and so find each other out. And the social temper developed in it is a thing, and a good thing, in itself. It is not friendship, and it ought not to be vilified because it is not what it must never profess to be. It is merely silly to talk about 'conventional shams,' and 'mockery of friendship,' where people are quite content to find pleasure for the time in free interchange of opinion, in conversation on topics found at the moment to be of common interest, and experience some slight sense of change and refreshment in

meeting new faces and hearing new voices. Of course the confidences of intimate friendship are not for the many; but if a man will consort with none but his intimate friends, he is apt to live in a close atmosphere where opinion is prone to become prejudice and unanimity to harden into an egotism of three. But there are few friendships more valuable than those which spontaneously grow out of affinities discovered, one cannot tell how, in the free air of a pretty general and pretty mixed society, where there is nothing but liking—not accident of relationship, neighbourhood, or business connection—to foster their growth. The wider the social area across which such friendships stretch, the more useful they are, for sympathy combined with difference of view, or a different method of approaching a subject, is a great mental and moral help and stimulus.

But this much I must grant to those who unfavourably contrast the tone and habits of social intercourse with the realities of friendship, that there may be people foolish enough to mistake the one for the other; and there certainly are people who have what I have called the social temper in a high degree, and who seem, in consequence of this, not only not to feel the need of intimate friendships, but even to be disqualified for forming or maintaining them. They are people who like to have others about them, who are always glad to see old acquaintances, always glad too to see new ones. They do take a kindly interest in you when they see you; but you must not suppose that your absence has caused them much sorrow of heart. Their interest wanes and springs again; you are always sure of a welcome, but you must not misinterpret it. They like to see others comfortable, but have no idea of binding people to them by eternal obligations. They will do all they can for you while you are at hand, but you must not appeal to any abiding thoughtfulness for you, or you will be bitterly disappointed. And without any consciousness of the fact, these good folks do bitterly disappoint many

who thought they were their friends. That was the mistake. As a rule, alas! they have no friends. They have been frightened and made uneasy at discovering now and then that their sociability has betrayed others into unsought confidences, that appeals are made to them for a sympathetic thoughtfulness which they have not in them to bestow. They nervously decline the care another would put upon them, or if they are hurried into assuming it, they do not bear it for him in whole or in part, but let it drop as quickly as they may. They are not consciously insincere, but just as an external wit may cover no lightness of heart, just as a smart argumentativeness may cover no power of independent thought or logical reasoning, so with them, kindly words—aye, and kindly thoughts and kindly deeds which are many—cover no heart-power of sustained sympathy, thoughtfulness, and patience for others. They have not wanted to go below the surface, and they have not gone; they have sought intercourse with their fellows only, or chiefly, as a means of pleasure; there was no harm in that, but if they have throughout found nothing more—no enrichment of mind or deepening of heart—then they themselves are much more to be pitied than those whose expectations they disappoint.

I believe it is when a man's life has no depth—when he has least self-knowledge, and little in himself that is worth the knowing, that he is either most dependent upon society, or most disappointed in it. A man who has some power of living from his own centre, who knows his own mind, and has that personal sincerity from which, I take it, modesty must be inseparable, will not be exorbitant in his expectations of what others can do for him, or prone to judge them as falling short of demands which he has a right to make. He will generally be the last to insist upon propounding on casual occasions his own serious views of things, and the last to complain that others are not serious enough. But still there is at least one thing of which he

has a right to complain—one social convention which I feel bound (in spite of my general defence of society) to denounce. It is that a different tone and manner is used in talking of a subject before several people from that which would be used in conversing upon it with any one of them separately. The best talkers often set the worst example in this matter. I suppose it is not unusual for one of such to be spoken to quietly apart by a listener with such words as 'You were talking just now about so-and-so; now I should be very glad to know what you *really* think about it.' I suppose he is flattered by such a remark, but he ought not to be; it seems to be a kind of convention that in a company above the number of three you may speak of things as they are not, and in a tone which you know not to be genuine, but affected; that people are to be surprised if you are serious and in a general way to take for granted that you are not. Now I am not decrying wit or humour; I am only denouncing the mistake of supposing that levity is nearly as good, and will do as well. I do not mean that one man is to be suffered to inflict a monologue, or two a dialogue, upon a whole table, just because they happen to be interested in this or that. But I maintain that the whole tone of our society is lowered, the uses of our social occasions are impaired, while the man who has special knowledge or deep interest in a subject or a cause must silently suffer it to be made mere occasion for jest, or run the risk of seeming to overstep the law of social fitness if he ventures to demur; I protest against the assumption that it is not good form for a man to speak seriously about matters on which he feels seriously. A theory that we snap off current interests, put off all serious things till to-morrow, and are ready for anything or nothing—a theory which might be applicable once a year, to a Christmas party or a Midsummer pic-nic—is obviously ridiculous when applied to ordinary social occasions. We cannot turn ourselves upside down every time we enter a friend's house. And we

need sometimes a little quiet unobtrusive protest that a man does not work at a thing all day to laugh at it in the evening; and that moral distinctions are really just the same after dinner as they were before.

Let your life be sincere. Seldom, I think, has the ordinary life of England been so nearly sincere as at present; never was there more real and serious purpose, or more intelligent interest, than there is now, especially in the young. Seldom has the sway of fashion extended so far, while causing so little damage to the inner fibre of life. Let us for shame cease to lend ourselves to representations of the world as more worldly than it is; of ourselves as more frivolous than we are.

> 'And play no tricks upon thy soul, O man.
> Let fact be fact and life the thing it can.'

V.

The Sacrifice of Fools.

A protest against the limitation of Religion to the sphere of the Emotions.

Toxteth.—1880.

Ecclesiastes v. 1:—'Be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools.'

WE often meet with indications of a prevalent sentiment that a period of active warfare between Science and Religion may now be regarded as closed. The materialistic Atheism of the last century, if not dead, has entered upon a phase of higher life. The speculations of this generation as to the origin of the earth and man have now lost something of the horror of their novelty, and Darwinism has ceased to be a nickname.

We hear all around us a tone of mild congratulation that Christianity has been through the mill of the newer criticism, and has come out fairly well, and even orthodoxy has fared better than might have been expected; and the evangelical mind plucks up courage to talk of 'an attack which has failed.'

Theology has grown a little ashamed of its alarm, and is trying to assure the world that it was quite sure from the beginning that there was nothing to fear. Numerous attempts at a reconciliation have appeared, or at least endeavours after a good understanding or *modus vivendi*. The diplomatist on the side of Science gives the assurance that whatever be his opinion as to the bases of religion, the ordinary observances of Christendom shall be respected. The representative of Religion promises to abstain from

offensive language, and to put his anathemas in his pocket. Science receives a considerable accession of territory; and Religion brings back from the conference 'peace with honour.'

But the truth is, I believe, that we have arrived at a settlement which is less tolerable than the uncertainty of warfare. For Religion is to evacuate and cede to Science all that realm which may be denominated Logical and Intellectual, and is to content herself with the domain of Faith which is called by the other side Emotion and Fancy. The champions of Religion may well try to persuade themselves that perhaps it is best so, for they have only themselves to thank for the issue. They have so often broken with Intellect that they could not wonder if it should now desert them. In the last resort, Systematic Divinity has admitted that its relations to intellect were really by no means intimate, and that the support of Faith was all that was really needed. Catholicism has openly defied the progressive claims of the civilized mind, openly withstood the demands of physical science, made use of Intellectual champions now and then, as a kind of Swiss guard in the world of letters, to defend a government they could not acknowledge as their own—and now boasts that it has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Protestantism set the Bible over against the Church, and proclaimed independence of conviction and the right of private judgment; but how often, in its unfaithfulness to its profession, has it only asked men to accept as one vast creed the whole Biblical literature, denounced as sceptical all attempts to apply to it any really literary criteria, and appealed to simple faith (by which was meant only an unreasoning credulity) to believe that somehow all Biblical expression, language, opinion, was all consistent, all true, and all divine! No wonder that Science was ready to avail itself of this depreciation of the understanding which has been effected in the name of Religion. She has been careful

to point out that Religion has ever allied itself with unscientific prejudice, with mistrust of Education, and disregard of common-sense. She asks that men should, in ordinary self-respect, refuse to abjure all verifying faculty—should use their eyes upon the facts that surround them, should trust the verdict of their senses, and where senses fail, should substitute strict reasoning for unsupported assumption. She will leave to Faith all that Faith can hold after having heard her version of the story of man's origin, life and experience. Sufficient for her is that sphere of the real and palpable which Religion has slighted and depreciated. She only asks for the undisputed possession of Reason, and then Faith may be as happy as she can with the remainder. Now there are many who are willing to shew us that this is as it should be, and that no one has a right to complain—nay, more, that Religion, now her province is at last definitely specified, has a prospect of renewed life and importance. The Positivist sees a new era of religious influence dawning from the moment you admit that the world can speak no word of God and immortality, and opens to the Fancy a cultus, and to the moral faculty a discipline, in which the worshipper should be for ever free from the haunting superstition of a living God and a divine perfection. Or if we do not like the sharp rule and defined form of the Positive Cultus of Humanity we may be left to roam as we will in the realm of religion, sure that there we shall find no iron logic, no inexorable law of truth, no intellectual obligation to turn us this way or that—we are in a land where these things have no force, and may be left in absolute liberty 'to fashion the mystery,' as Prof. Tyndall used to say, 'in accordance with our own needs.' We are in a subjective realm, where taste and sentiment may determine everything, and ignore all matters of fact. The treaty-rights of this dominion are to be jealously guarded for a time at least; religion is not to be meddled with, but things will

take their course. So between Intellect and Sense a little enclosure is to be found in which she may expatiate at will, just as the government of the United States appoints what are called Indian Reserves in which its redskinned subjects may enjoy themselves at pleasure, and dwindle away in peace.

I am drawing no caricature. I read words written in earnest to the effect that it must be accepted on all hands that such a juxtaposition of words as 'Rational Theology' must be admitted to be a contradiction in terms. Theology is the account which Religion has to give of itself, its explanation of its language and its meaning. But let it not assume to speak with the voice, to address itself to the ear, of Reason; this would be to violate the partition-treaty, and waken suspicion of new encroachment. For, so I read, 'Nothing that is rational can at the same time be theological; and nothing that is theological can at the same time be rational.' Against this reconciliation (forsooth!) of Religion and Science, my whole soul rises in indignant protest. And yet, believe me, this is the accommodation which is, far and wide, being recognised in the literature of the day as the tacit understanding upon which Religion is to have a prolonged existence; veiled in obscurer language, it is being accepted by the representatives of Religion as a blessed guarantee of peace and security. To acquiesce in such a settlement is to cry 'Peace, Peace,' when there is no peace, and cannot be. If it represents any truth, then are you and I, my friends, seeking here some emotional gratification which our reason will disparage, if it does not absolutely deride. We are playing off upon ourselves the appliances of a moral heating apparatus, nursing virtue upon delusion, appealing to no ultimate sanctions, but merely investing with big names the creations of a pampered imagination; we are worshipping our irrational selves disguised under fine attributes and divine names, lest, as Fenerbach would tell us, we should seem

to ourselves too intolerably egotistical; but all the while we are only offering the sacrifice of fools.

Again, we are obliged to confess that the slight put upon Theology is one which it has courted at the hands of the Rationalist. Whence the alleged contradiction in terms to which I have alluded? It is assumed from the fact that while the operations of reason are unchallenged in all that appeals to sense and logic, external observation and mental process, Theology has claimed to deal with matters in its own way, has in fact declared belief to be independent of evidence on the ground that she deals with the ultimate mystery.

It would be well indeed if Theology had reminded men of the mysteries of God, Nature, and man, if, as with other sciences, she had made men eager to pierce the veil of the still unknown, or if she had kept them tranced by a feeling of awe before the shrine of Him who is past their finding out; but unfortunately nothing has done so much as what is called Theology, as what is called Religion, to dissipate men's natural sense of awe and mystery before the Unknown. Professing to impart the knowledge of God, it has crushed the heart of devotion under systems and catechisms, mechanical schemes and forensic devices. Instead of bringing man face to face with God, it has confronted him with a fourth century creed. Instead of bidding man look on Nature for a revelation of the Most High—reverence the consciousness of man as a temple of the living God—it has told him that both are godless and voiceless, it has poured contempt on the life of to-day with its sorrows, its questions, its mysteries, as solemn as they were ever of old, and has offered men a pseudo-science evolved out of thought suddenly arrested, literature suddenly canonized, and religious history suddenly checked in its development. Religion is left to play with this, within the circle of its guaranteed enclosure. But meanwhile Science whispers to us that if we really

want to know the meaning of Religion, and why it is to be treated with some respect as long as it continues, we must not suppose Theology has aught to do with it in reality. We may learn all that is real from a Science of Religions which, passing behind the Theology of the schools, will treat it as a mere phenomenon to be classed, and explain its presence as a survival in culture.

It is fitting that those who stand in the line of the Rational Theologians of the past should maintain that a rational theology is still possible. We have never recognised that Theology is the exposition of a creed, or a justification of articles, but have always used the term to include what philosophy of Religion has been possible in each generation. And we now testify against the separation of spheres in thought and study, and the bisection of human interests. We complain that science is marred, that man is weakened and perverted, and the scientific study of man baffled when we regard the sphere of religion as an emotional playground in which it is difficult to disport oneself without some loss of self-respect. We certainly have no disposition to warn intellectual and philosophical investigation off the field of morals and religion; rather we have to invite them to come and bestow upon these most essential factors of humanity some of that keenness of observation, that patient and assiduous gathering together of data and reasoning upon them—aye, even that scientific use of the imagination—which have won such triumphs in the sphere of man's physical development, and have in modern times revolutionized the study of the human body and the human mind. We complain that here the interest stops short, and that instead of accounting for man's religion and morals, instead of recognising these as phenomena as essential to true humanity as an opposing thumb or a pineal gland, we are left to conclude that here, of all places, the development of human character as manifested in its highest types has somehow gone wrong,

the line of evolution diverges into sheer mistake. Here man has developed functions for which there were no uses and no objects—here, man threw out powers and organs in a singular endeavour to adapt himself to conditions which did not exist; and it can only be hoped that these may be allowed to drop off as their uselessness becomes confessed, or may be adapted in time to carrying on the work of a religion with no God, and a morality with no conscience. Obviously no science or philosophy of man can be adequate whose attitude, with regard to the things which the great majority of contemporary civilized mankind regards as the supreme endowments of the race, is practically expressed by 'the less said about them the better.' If this is a result of that compact by which Science is induced to stay its hand and spare our shrines that we may keep at least the charm of old association, the luxury of idyllic repose beneath the shades of venerated form and rite, the occasional indulgence of sentiment now effete and threadbare, we at all events should be no party to it. If this is all that religion has left, it is best that we should know it. If our religious observance has no reasoned truth to support it, if our prayer and praise represent simply our idea of a method of self-improvement in one direction, if religious emotion is the weakness of a mind below par which intellect in its sterner moments and its business-like judgment may condone but cannot approve, then let us be deluded no longer. Let us have done with these things; the honest course is to set ourselves to extirpate them, to utterly disdain the indulgent assurance of Science that it is in no hurry and is quite content to let them linger on, because 'though there is no truth in religion, there is some nice feeling in it.' We at least, I trust, who have come, or whose fathers have come, thus far for the testimony of truth, are not likely now to beg that if there be a newer truth—nay, if there be any honest striving after truth, or any fearless speech of results that seem to candid minds to point in the

direction of truth—we may be spared the painful hearing, and allowed to live in illusion, because we like it. My friends, the majority of you probably agree with me that the ultimate facts of human religion have their bases so deep in the nature of things and the nature of man, that they will not be seriously shaken. I believe that the faith of man in a living God, the belief in man's moral responsibility, and his ascent through conscience into communion with God, will prove to be compatible with all that physical science can reveal, or mental science can tabulate. It may seem to you, therefore, that we have least to fear from such an attitude towards religion on the part of the exponents of physical science as I have been describing, and that as we do not think the time will ever come when fidelity to truth will take us beyond the realm of religion altogether, we shall never be moved. But we are being moved already. We are perhaps thrown more into contact, and into sympathy, with both the literature and the conversation which does most to spread a quietly depreciatory tone with regard to theology and religion. We have no church that can put a dogmatic shield between us and the coldest wind of critical negation, and we are not easily disturbed or shocked. But we are apt to catch the pseudo-scientific tone without any real knowledge of scientific procedure, to consciously let down the temperature of our religious life, and to act and speak occasionally as if we thought that a truly liberal mind must necessarily wear its religious faith very lightly. I much fear that this is a chief reason of the disuse of the distinctively Christian ordinances. If anyone has a conscientious objection to the baptism or dedication of children, or to participation in the Lord's Supper, I can thoroughly respect any such scruple; but the case is far otherwise when there is only a vague idea, for which no particular reason can be alleged, that clever people as a rule have advanced far beyond such observances, or have seen the vanity of them, and that in

practising them a man would somehow be throwing in his lot with exploded superstition. And as to the religious prospects of our children, it is our fault if they grow up to look upon Religion as a kind of æsthetic relaxation, the place of which is more pleasantly and quite as well (from the point of view of refinement) supplied by Art or Music; on religious emotion and aspiration as something akin to the luxury of sentimental tears, and never know the true strength of a rational faith as an intellectual and moral backbone to the constitution of the inner man. And why have they not? Our religious position means Private Judgment, Individual Conviction, every man's being 'fully persuaded in his own mind.' Is it to mean this no longer? Our churches represent religious pilgrimages from many points of the theological world, undertaken at the bidding of religious sincerity. Our fathers set out, like Abraham, not knowing whither they went, and many in each generation have come on the same quest of a better truth, leaving old homes of faith to join them. Our greatest infidelity towards the traditions we honour would be shewn in our allowing the conviction that there is a truth at once religious and reasonable—in other words, that a rational theology is possible and that it is our duty to have one—to die out. I dread lest our young people should be religious only by habit and association, and lest they worship with genuine feeling indeed, but worship they know not what, and they know not why. It is unfair to them to let the whole strain of the religious and moral life fall upon the powers of feeling, on the strength of a good sentiment, on the occasional domination of an elevating and unselfish emotion. Why do they not know religion in connection with reasoned thought; why should not they know theology as a rationale of personal religion? I fear the answer throws a good deal of responsibility upon us, and often comes in effect to this, that we in our generation have not done our part; we have not done as well for

them as our parents did for us—and why? Because what we were taught when we were young will not serve again for our young people, and we have not progressively thought out our religious belief into any form in which we can present it to our children, and have in some cases left them to glean our theological position only by observing (if they will take pains to observe) what it is that we do not condemn. I should be sorry to think that habit and association is to be the only link which binds them to the worship of God, and sorry too if the only strengthening of the tie should be on the side of emotion. For in them religious feeling will flow strong and pure, the tides of the spirit will rise, the old, old experience of sinking through the deep places of our own life into the infinite deep beyond, the old connection of the loneliest and most private hour with the sense that we are not alone but Another is with us, will be found again by them. For life will have for them in the main the same needs and lessons as ever of old. But it does matter whether these facts are recognised as the starting-points of the true reading of life, the first intuitions of the real conditions that lie behind sense and self—or whether they are regarded as curious phenomena which explain a good deal of literature, art, and folk-lore, or momentary glimpses into a land of visionary and poetical unreality. And even if this be not so, but these experiences of life be treasured in memory, yet are linked with no steadily growing thought, no intellectual interest of the present, they appear in retrospect like the memory of an hour spent with the mystic or the pietist, leaving a strange sweet savour, strong but suspected. How many lives are there which owe all their grace and no little of their power and goodness to the persistence of those habits of feeling which were wrought by the early beliefs which the men have ceased to hold. Yet how melancholy is the confession which such men make in Renan's words, 'I feel that my life is governed by a faith which I possess no more.'

O let your children know that the early experiences of religion are not the sentimental fringe of a life that must soon be occupied with things more real. Let them know that their best thought need never renounce the task of furnishing an intellectual basis for religion—that each generation with all its mental changes, freely throwing out new doctrinal expression, new form of helpful rite or public worship, may have the same God and the same helpful trust in Him—that it need not spend its heart in endeavouring to revive the feeling that spoke in ancient words, while in God it moves and has its being—that it may see Him, not less, but more clearly than the generations which are behind, and pray to Him, and praise Him, not only with the spirit, but with the understanding also.

VI.

'Lead us not into temptation.'

Toxteth.—1881.

St. Matt. vi. 13:—'Lead us not into temptation.'

THERE are probably no words in the Bible so familiar to men and women throughout the whole world as those of the Lord's prayer; they are used so constantly, and so much from devotional habit, that their full significance is apt to pass unrealized; and on the other hand, where criticism of a somewhat captious sort arises, and demands that religious people shall know what they are talking about, we feel that we would rather not have the language of these petitions revised or improved, and that we are quite content to go on using it without undertaking a critical examination for the purpose of discovering whether it does exactly represent what we most want to pray for, whether it is in precise accord with our present-day religious conceptions, or whether we could more accurately express our needs and aspirations in a different form of words. The uplifting of the heart necessarily means more than our lips can speak; our words, even at their best, or the words which we may adopt as ours from godly writers or venerable manuals of prayer, are poor in meaning perhaps in the ear of God when compared with the 'groaning which cannot be uttered.' In any case the words are, more than all else, a means towards spiritual communion with God. We do not always pray the same prayer when we use the same familiar words. At one time

they go from us bearing just the slight touch of seriousness which is all that our passing mood inclines to; at another, the worn and wearied soul finds in them the only speech for which it has strength; in different degrees of intensity, sometimes with glad renewal of old feeling, sometimes with a strange rush of new emotion, we repeat again the words of prayer which have been familiar to us from childhood, and which perhaps have come to mean to us just the most simple and natural turning of thought and affection God-ward. Strongly as I contend for the most honest sincerity of speech in times and forms of worship, I cannot criticize a prayer which has become the symbol of personal desire to pray; and when I am told that our prayers do not represent the needs we feel, but those which we think sometimes we ought to feel—that we assume an air of aspiration that is foreign to the regular routine of our life and interest—I can only say that I would rather beg 'for grace from day to day to live more nearly as we pray' than for prosaic veracity to pray 'more nearly as we live.'

But this particular petition 'Lead us not into temptation' has been objected to, or regarded with doubt, even by religious writers, on two grounds, both of which deserve consideration. I have seen it noted recently as one of the very few passages in the whole of the Sermon on the Mount which is not in accordance with the highest religious thought of the present day, with a suggestion indeed that perhaps it is an interpolation, and did not really proceed from one who had so exalted a thought of God and His dealings with man as Jesus undoubtedly had—on the ground that God leads no one into temptation. We have not the excuse to allege for our weakness and our fall that we are exposed by God to trials too hard for our strength, nor may we think of Him as trying moral experiments upon us. For this view we might adduce the pointed words of the Epistle of James (i. 13, 14): 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.' I doubt not that this is strictly true. That the temptation is a temptation, that we are tempted, allured, brought into moral hesitation and wavering by it, is a matter of our own responsibility. If there were no foe within the gates, there would be no danger from the enemy without. There must be something in us to which the temptation speaks; and if it speaks with power, if it gains compliance, it is because some part of our nature is disloyal to the moral law, is wavering and uncertain in its allegiance, our own lusts are not subject to our better will, and there must be no doubt as to who is answerable for the lack of self-control, and the laxity that permits a traitor in the camp. This is a hard saying perhaps. Paul's disciples found it so. The apostle himself groaned bitterly over the fact that while with his spirit he could gladly and willingly serve the law of God, still his lower nature gave the lie to his aspirations, and he was humiliated by being forced to recognise the power which old thoughts and passions still had, to bring him once again 'under the law of sin and death.' But one who recognizes, as Paul did, that these temptations come from below, not from above, cannot attempt to throw the responsibility for them on God. When the Corinthians were inclined to complain that God was trying them too fiercely, he tells them 'there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man' (I. Cor. x. 13), *i.e.* incidental to his nature, lot and circumstances. True it is, that God tempteth not any man. But whether in the course of His providential leading through this world, temptation be not, perhaps necessarily, incidental to our nature, lot and circumstances, is another matter.

Yes, say the objectors on the other side; but if so, why hesitate to say that God does lead us, for our good, into temptation? Only thus does He make men and women of us; only so is character formed, and virtue proved,

and strength gained. It is timidity, it is ignorance of ourselves and of our highest good, it is the soul that craves indulgence, and is content to forego the excellence that is born of discipline and hardship, that prays 'Lead us not into temptation.' Rather should we quote another passage from the Epistle of James, 'Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience,' endurance, stability (i. 2, 3). Virtue that is known only in a theory, morals that bloom only in a conservatory, courage that has never been put to the test, may turn out to be mere emptiness and delusion. Now as of old, it is the knowledge of Good and Evil which is to awaken man from the sleep of childish innocence to the knowledge of his own powers, duties, and responsibilities. As the body can only gain real strength by exercise, so the soul must be hardened by effort and endurance. It must cleave to the good and reject the evil. But to do this, it must actually be within arm's length of the evil, must honestly face its power, must exercise a real judgment, and learn self-mastery by steady effort of will. Yes; this is true. We cannot award the palm of human excellence in cases where we can only speak as to a good set of principles with a set of circumstances specially adapted to their preservation. We fear these exotics would die in the common air. We want to know how the man holds his own in this very mixed, struggling world. We decline to judge character by first appearances, as we want to know of a gun barrel or a railway bridge that it has been fully and deliberately tested even by rather an extra strain before we place much confidence in it. Let us then be sure, say many thoughtful people, that God means nothing but our good in the temptations to which He knowingly subjects us; that by them, and by them only, is His discipline for the formation of our characters being carried on, and the doing of the particular work which He has marked out for us being prepared for. The

proof may be hard, but we must have the faith of Job who says 'When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as the gold.' For the reinforcement, however, of our personal trust in the time of trial, for the remembrance of the high issues at stake, the high calling to which we may not be unfaithful, we will pray God to grant us the felt companionship of His Spirit. And so they have substituted, as I see in some printed forms, for the words of my text, these: 'Leave us not in temptation.'

I have fully admitted the truth of the ground upon which this latter objection is based. It is only by self-determination and self-control that actual virtue is attained. We only practise goodness in its proper sense when we consciously choose it for our guide and reject the evil or the inferior alternative. Everything good, lovely, and beautiful in this world emerges out of contrasts. When our whole thought and language, nay, our consciousness, the development of our senses, and the perceptions that depend upon them, involving all our mental progress, are the products of such antitheses as those between self and not self, same and other, near and far, light and darkness, harmony and discord, true and false, it is no wonder that our whole moral nature and conformation—what we call character—should depend upon the contrast of good and bad. Just as sense, perception, reason would be kept in one undeveloped babyish stage if we lived in a world where everything was at precisely the same distance from us, whose scenery and surroundings were absolutely uniform, where there was always the same degree of light or darkness, where we always heard the same sounds, always heard precisely the same unvaried teaching, always did uninterruptedly and unquestioningly the same things—so we should never rise to the dignity of moral decision and action if there were for us no occasion for choice between motives and deeds, if the shock of temptation never caused us to find out what spirit we are

of, if we had not to test our strength by resistance, and learn steadfastness by the near prospect of a fall. A thing is not right unless there is clear possibility of wrong; so action is not distinctly good where there was no possibility, no felt presence, of an evil choice. Where this is absent there is no moral quality at all save that which you may attribute to the habit which has become so dominant that the bad alternative had no chance, and could not disturb the man by one moment of moral conflict or confusion. Then, that was good habit, good training; it belongs to a character—but how constructed? Every brick in its building marks a victory, and now it makes so strong a bulwark that the old battles have not to be fought again, and the old temptations make no more impression than the rain-drops.

I believe trial to be as necessary for human character as it is inevitable in human life. And yet I am content to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation.' I cannot calmly regard the prospect of fierce trial, and certainly would not wantonly seek the chances of falling just to prove my own steadfastness. Surely, if we are living in the world, we find in business, even in social and in family life, what seems to us trial enough for the exercise of character, if indeed we are keeping some sacred thought of duty, some remembrance of a high ideal. We do not expect to be anything heroic either in achievement or in resistance; but we find when we really judge ourselves, that the daily needs of the struggle against the slavery of habit, the growing power of selfishness, the infirmities of temper, the dangers of waning spirituality and contented absorption in small or even unworthy interests, involve the exercise of resolution, the testing of faith, the wrestlings of the spirit, and the resisting of the devil. We need a keener perception of the moral significance of the lives we are leading, and the customs we are forming or supporting from day to day. I know not who can look forward with confidence or joy

to the shock of unforeseen trial, or beg for some fiery ordeal to put the seal of heroism upon his constancy.

> 'Let bolder hearts the strife require
> And rush upon the foe;
> Far lowlier is our heart's desire;
> Our frailty, Lord, we know.
> We would not ask a sight of sin
> Our steadfastness to prove,
> Or let the tempter audience win
> To shew how strong our love.'

The more truly we are aware of the solemn purposes of life, the height of its possibilities, the poorness of our achievement, the more truly, I believe, shall we give care to guard ourselves from the beginnings of evil, and pray that we may not be put too severely to the test. As we go on in life we gain, I trust, modesty with self-knowledge; and we learn that we have not passed as scatheless as perhaps we thought through occasions on which we believed our virtue had shewn itself incorruptible. We learn, for example, that familiarity with the externals of vice—that even the satire or the invective which exposes under the plea of denouncing the plays which make romance of moral vacillation—may gain power to efface the sharpness of moral distinctions, and set up a mental temptation to impurity of thought.

The prayer 'Lead us not into temptation' was given to his disciples by one who had not long before passed through a terrible mental conflict—that setting of the purpose of his life full in view, that conquest over the meaner alternatives, that hardening of the soul to bear—which has come down to us in figurative guise in the account of the forty days' temptation in the desert. Jesus, 'tempted in all points like as we are,' had, besides, temptations entailed by the very loftiness of his aims, and inseparable from the life which determines to be, before all things,

spiritual and beneficent. There are some modern exponents of what is called the Higher Christian Life, or even 'Perfect Holiness,' who profess to have attained an absolute immunity from temptation. Jesus, who has just passed the fiery trial, who has dared to think that God, well pleased, has marked him as a Son, teaches us to pray that God's good guidance may not bring us through the same way of terrible discipline. The bravest soldier does not talk lightly of the battle in which he was in the thickest of the fight; he would rather it were not mentioned; the horror of it is more present to his mind than the glory. It was the conscience that knew the anguish of moral struggle, the weariness of the long watch over motive and desire—it was the pure heart that, knowing the brightness of the Father's face, knew the dimness of the hour of strife and the dark shades that seem to shut out the light of God from the soul of man—that prayed not to be led into temptation, and again, in the final crisis, that the cup might pass from him. I cannot think that the one prayer more than the other marks a defect of constancy or of resignation.

We do not ask God for exemption from the trials of life, or pray that we may spend our days within some charmed circle where its griefs cannot touch us. But as these things drive the soul to find its refuge in God, so does the anticipation of them cause us to feel keenly our own weakness; and if we do not know that absolute consternation which the sudden vivid thought of change, trial, bereavement brings, when it drops, as it were, into our minds out of a clear sky, yet we know that all our theories of sorrow, our philosophy of discipline, are very hard to apply to our own cases; we cannot use as a prophylactic those consolations which may help to heal the wound once given; we should hate our own heartlessness if we could. We know that there are sorrows which, as years go on, we must face; there will be inevitable partings; there will be

changes such as time must bring. But we do not welcome them; we do not calculate the benefits of a godly sorrow, or estimate the advantage to our characters of the 'peaceable fruits' which it may bring.

> 'Who shall so forecast the years,
> And find in life a gain to match,
> And reach a hand through time to catch
> The far-off interest of tears.'

We may have marked with wonder the refining influences of bodily suffering, and noticed how the quiet graces of a trustful disposition have been born from the constraint and patience of a long illness. Yet none of us can calmly contemplate the possibility of being subject to fierce onslaughts of physical pain; we dread the loss of self-control, the hours when resolution flees, and the sufferer cannot even think; still more terrible indeed if mental anguish be added; and if beneath the pressure of both combined Jesus himself felt as if he had dropped out of the everlasting arms, and even God had forsaken him, which of us can steel his heart, and say, 'I shall never be moved'? And similarly, I know not how a man who has known something of temptation and struggle, who knows that it is to himself sometimes almost a miracle that he has held on his way as he has, can calmly contemplate the advent of some crisis of temptation, some darkest hour of moral strife. We know that they come, of course; the men we meet in business do not say, 'By the mercy of God I am an honest man still to-day,' but we know the wide-spread reality of the struggle and effort to keep upon the line of righteousness and honour; we see every now and then the quiet course of professional life abruptly broken off, we see vacant places around us, names are silently struck off the roll of honourable men, and these things bring the fact very near to us, we wonder 'Whose turn next,' and mutter 'Lord, is it I?'

It is a blessed thing that God brings into the world with every new generation a new inspiration of moral ambition, a perpetually fresh reinforcement of spirit and hope and courage for the old battle of right against wrong. The pure heart of innocence, the eagerness of moral enthusiasm runs long and is not weary, walks far and is not faint; but the feet grow heavy, and the way monotonous, and things thrown lightly off at first begin to lay their weight upon the soul. The modesty that comes of self-knowledge, though somewhat bitter in the acquisition, may guard us from the peril of him that 'thinketh he standeth'; and middle age—age oftener perhaps than youth—may humbly acknowledge its need of God's help and guidance, and pray 'Lead us not into temptation.'

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

VII.

'Two or Three Berries.'

Altrincham.—November, 1891.

Isaiah xvii. 4-7:—'In that day it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin; and it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree; two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough; four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel.'

THIS is part of Isaiah's application to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom, of his doctrine of the remnant which he has already applied to his own people of Judah. The discipline of nations is his theme. Like many another religious and social reformer, he is sure that in each case the kingdom that he sees is very far from the Kingdom of God; he cannot see even the beginnings of the life that must be in the life that is; it looks as if Reform could not be sufficient. There must be a root and branch clearing of the old before there is any hope of the new. In every sphere of life, public and private, there is a flaunting over-blown luxuriance which threatens to exhaust the sources, to kill the stock of national existence. In the 6th chapter he expressed his hope for Judah by the similitude of a tree cut back till only one branch, one small shoot, was left on the old stock, the one slender chance of life still, from the ancient root. So for the nation a slender remnant was all that should survive the terrible discipline of pruning and lopping. The righteous and the humble, despised in the day of prosperity and pride, will turn out to be the sole hope and strength of the future; 'the holy seed is the substance thereof.' In the passage before us the metaphor is changed; it is still full of the imagery of the soil, as Isaiah's writing so generally is. But here we see the fall

of the northern kingdom represented as a harvest to the spoiler ; the glory of Samaria is simply awaiting the time of full ripeness, and then it will fall as the swathes of golden corn before the reaper. Here, too, there is a remnant left ; the little sparsest gleaning reminds one of the plenty that has been ; the two or three berries left to shrivel on the uppermost bough, the four or five on the outmost branches* point a melancholy moral. 'The harvest is past ; the summer is ended.' But the prophet means that at least all is not gone ; there is something even here for the careful eye and hand. And we can verify His promise for ourselves as we note the solitary spray of brilliant leaves still gleaming on high on some college wall, the last shred of its crimson glory, or as we walk by the woods and hedgerows, now that the fire of autumn is burning low—and in our rather grey landscape we are grateful for the few bright bits that linger here and there,—the hips and haws, very few and far between this year, the late flowers still looking over the paling of a cottage garden, the bracken, most beautiful in death, and when the masses of foliage have been shivered by the keen winds, the strange way in which single trees still wear their rags of beauty—and the quaint freaks of nature's paint-brush in the markings of single leaves. Just as a picture shows oftentimes what we may look for and see for ourselves—so does the poet see for us what we might have passed a thousand times unnoticed. It is the office and function of poet and artist alike to open the blind eyes, to insulate for us certain aspects of nature and life which escape us owing to their very familiarity, and so to enrich the common lot and its daily ways with these treasures of observation which are the 'harvest of the quiet eye.' And so Isaiah's image prompts us to note the beauty of the remnants, the value of the things that remain ; it turns our thought away from the sadness of scene and season which are at first suggestive

* 'Aliquot (ut ait auctor) reliquimus altipendulos vindemiæ superstites.'—*M. Aurelius to Fronto* IV. 6. (*Ed. Naber.*)

only of plenty disappeared, of glory departed, of colour, sunshine, luxuriance all replaced by grey skies and brown fields, and the bare twig and the yellow leaf careering in the wind or rustling beneath your tread. It bids us note that what is left is beautiful in its season and in its own way ; it is a salvage, but it is not a mere wreck. The very processes of change and decay are fit and fair ; the autumn has glories of its own ; the humbler beauties of the woods, the mosses and the fungi, the seed-clusters, the leaf-shapes, call for our admiration. And those things which are the foundation of so much, yet of which we think so little till we see them freshly unveiled—the varied forms of the trees themselves, their grace and strength, the spring and sweep of their upleaping or wide-spreading boughs, and the marvellous interlacing of their twigs, are revealed. And no less do we appreciate the unchanged beauty of the evergreens, the sheen of ivy and holly, and the pines (never more beautiful than in November) showing up with a kind of steel-blue bloom upon them against their brown and grey surroundings. So we may perhaps not unprofitably pursue the prophet's analogy, and apply it to the things that are left over—some belonging to the season of change, the autumn of our life and hope—and some, like the evergreens, constants of our landscape, yet never valued so much before ; alike, things which in our first thought seem poor by contrast with what has been, or what might be, but which only need that we should make the best of them, take with a willing heart what the season brings or leaves, to reveal a beauty of their own. We may think of the differences between the values we place upon certain of the familiar elements of life at different times in our life-history ; of the correction of our estimates which change of circumstance, the shifting of the scenery of our little world, may effect ; of happy days and years spent under conditions or amid surroundings we were once sure we could never endure ; of the dissipation of a good deal of ambition, and the repression of some self-assertion,

and the finding of a life worth living after many a disappointment, on a humble and ordinary level; even of bitter loss that has led the tried soul to a new contentment and even a new and chastened reverence for the things that remain to it.

There is some healthy teaching—as well as a good deal of unhealthy teaching—in what is sometimes called the doctrine of Compensation. In its most common religious application it is derived from the notion, natural enough in times of suffering and persecution, that God's judgment would reverse the circumstances of men; if His kingdom comes on earth, He will 'cast down the mighty from their seat and exalt the humble and meek'; if it is only in another world, the principle is expressed in 'Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted and thou art tormented.' The general application of this doctrine to the world of any time is unhealthy when it takes the form of falsely assuming that the righteous must be unhappy in this present world, and that the sinners are the happy people in it; and that the great inducement to righteousness is that you will get more in the long run by being good, because the pleasures of sin are only for a season, while the rewards of goodness are eternal. All this proceeds on the assumption that the circumstances of men here and hereafter are the particular scene of God's judgments, and yet that a favourable condition of them here is so much more likely to befall the sinner than the saint, that the balance has to be adjusted in the next world. Transfer the whole case under consideration from external to internal condition, from circumstance to character, and principle becomes clearer. The honest man does not want to be compensated in heaven for not having been dishonest on earth; he may permit himself a kind of scornful intolerance of the man who thrives on fraud or foulness, but he cannot imagine that it is God's concern to level him up to the luxury of the man whose very pleasures he despises. I do not mean to say that the sinner

is necessarily unhappy, and that the righteous is to comfort himself, as the Psalmist was wont to do, with the thought that the sinner's prosperity is only a vain show, passing like a shadow, and only concealing for a time an inward misery. I have no doubt there are hardy scoundrels who thoroughly enjoy themselves, but they do not enjoy much more. I believe that for living on this earth, and getting the most out of it—out of nature, and the relations of life, and men and women in the workaday world—there is nothing like the old-fashioned good conscience, not because a man who has 'the approval of a good conscience before God' is to be considered as commissioned to deal with all men and things from a high moral platform, with a satisfaction that is at least equal to any other man's questionable pleasure. No; I should say, because he has as little as possible of that conscience which is self-consciousness; because his relations with all life are natural; because his moral nature is not exceptional but normal; because he is healthy and not morbid; because he is in a position to weigh the goods and ills of the world in honest scales with honest weights. And so we find the resources of character showing their independence of circumstance; there need be no underrating of the advantages of wealth or position, no pretence of scorning the rewards which human respect can give. It is not fortitude, it is a shrinking confession of sensibility, that rails against the vanity and hollowness of everything itself must go without. Very different is the tone of quiet and assured strength. It may pass from summer to autumn, from hey-day to decline, from high noon to evening grey; it knows what is gone, what will not recur again. But it knows the value of the things that remain. Instead of repining that the old sphere, the old opportunities are no longer its own, it finds work and beauty still, just where it is. You know how often, within one's own experience, the doctrine of compensation seems to be verified in relation to the bodily senses and faculties, how the loss of one sense seems to throw a surplus of power into

the quickening of another, how a new refinement of sensation, an enhanced enjoyment of limited powers, seems to come with the very limitation! Have you not noticed too, how the healthy nature does its utmost with the things that remain, how loss of external activity often opens the way to increased mental concentration, how the renouncing of an extended usefulness may be the foundation of a tender and inspiring patience. A simple and healthy character, like a vigorous body, has a strange power of healing its wounds and repairing its tissues; but not only so, it may do more than repair the wounds inflicted by the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.' It may acknowledge that many of its enjoyments, of its ambitions, of its powers, are gone into the irrevocable past, that for good or ill the harvest-tide is over now, that its way of life is fallen into the 'sere, the yellow leaf,' that autumn is not summer and cannot be the same, and do this with scarce a pang. For the faithful soul sees but another season of life's little year moving for it into the moving skies, and doubts not that it has sights to see and voices to hear which are not those of springtime or of summer. It is a shock when it comes, this intimation that we cannot do as we have done, that we have to set our house in order, and make the most according to our lights, of the things that are left to us. It is vain to repine, to live only in our disappointments, or in the memory of the good intentions we have not had the strength—or we prefer to say, the time—to fulfil. There is nothing left, we cry, if we must give up our current interests, the very things for which we were content to spend and be spent, the causes which lifted our little efforts into something worthy and honourable. But all around us is the lesson, to be read in the autumnal landscape, of beauty in the remnants, of bright points more prized because they are few, of grey days with a loveliness all their own, of the permanent scenery of life when the transient has vanished, of light at eventide.

And if we could penetrate the lives around us, we should find no more helpful and touching lesson in all human experience than that which many a simple heart could teach us—of dreaded changes that have left a blessing behind them, of new happiness found when all seemed lost, of the sweetness of the blessings left when all seemed to have gone, and of new interest and beauty in daily common things never truly valued before. Is the change which seemed to have altered even the skies above you and the earth beneath your feet, a loss of wealth or position? Study well the human landscape around you as you would mark the scanty gracious beauty of the autumn woods, and you will learn with a strange surprise how much may be made of life in small measures and at low levels, how the things that are gone reveal the real worth of what is left, how a new enjoyment and a new thankfulness may take the place of vain regrets, and the greatest blessing of all life be found in a disciplined, cheerful disposition which can brighten with a gleam of its own joy the common ways of duty and of patience. No man ever better exemplified the sweet uses of adversity than Bishop Jeremy Taylor who, turned with his family out of house and home, his property spoiled and his income confiscated, could yet write thus: 'I am fallen into the hands of publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me. What now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, much to see, many friends to pity me and some to relieve me, and I can discourse still, and unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, my cheerful spirit and good conscience; they have still left me the providence of God, all the hopes of the Gospel, my religion, my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too; and he that hath so many causes of joy and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness who loses all these pleasures and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns.'

Ah, yes! you may say, the strong man, the proved and stable character may hold his own in the seasons of change, and in poverty as in wealth rise above circumstance, be master of his fate and possess his soul in peace. But it is not so with all; *we* change, no less than our circumstances, we do not keep our better soul, we pass our prime in the life of thought and action, the hope of our spring-time the promise of our golden summer has dwindled away, our harvest is but a gleaning, our ingathering 'two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough.'

Yes; it is a solemn thing when you have to take account of what is left, not merely of time and circumstance, but what is left of you yourself, when you realise that you are not what you were. Your ideals are bygone, your ambitions have grown cold, your powers and tasks are alike limited. But even here you may not live entirely in the memory of what has been, or in vain regrets for what might have been. The winter of life may have a beauty of its own, a proper fitness and a peculiar grace in character as well as in circumstance. Activities are past, the busy round of duties gives place to the knowledge that you must largely be content to be a portion of the background and scenery of other lives. But it is not a little thing to do this, and to do it sweetly and well. Those who are now in their day, bearing the burden and heat of life, turn with a feeling of rest and relief and pure elevating affection to those quiet presences at home which are still the centre of the old life and all that it means to them; the home is always where they are; no one knows, understands, sympathises, as they do. They are no mere circumstance in the lives of others. If they may do nothing more, they may win the blessing of those who have a little strength, and faithfully discharge the task which comes to them when others must be relinquished—to keep the word of a Divine patience, and to find in it the peace of God which passeth understanding. Amen.

VIII.

Two Talents.

Altrincham.—October, 1891.

St. Matt. xxv. 15:—'And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to every man according to his several ability.'

THE words of the text sufficiently recall to you the main point of the moral significance of the Parable of the Talents. It is a remarkable indication of the way in which the language of the New Testament has entered into English life and speech that we talk about a man's talents, and about talented people, quite unaware that we are using the language of metaphor. But there is this curious little perversion in our ordinary use of this figure; when we speak of a man's talents we mean his abilities, whereas in the parable the talents are allotted to each according to his several ability; they are the things he has to turn to account by the exercise of his powers—the advantages and opportunities that do not come alike to all, but of which each must make the best he can. No doubt we all alike see that the whole gist of the parable is in brief, 'Trust in proportion to ability,' and at the same time, the identical responsibility of the unequally endowed. The servant may not be excused for doing nothing on the plea that the task allotted was *above* his powers, or that it was *below* them. I am sorry the parable does not give us any insight into the mental condition of more than one of the three servants mentioned. We know something of what passed in the mind of the man to whom one talent was

allotted, but he does not say whether he thought his ability was under- or over-estimated. He does not consider his own case or character, he considers only the character of the master who sets him his task; he finds it to be exacting and unfair, hard and grasping, and acquits himself of effort on the ground that whatever he does, he is sure not to give satisfaction, and sure not to get the recognition he deserves. Beginning then at this point, which seems clear, let us translate the parable and apply its obvious teaching as to different abilities and uniform responsibilities in the terms of more modern life and circumstance.

We are not surprised that the man with one talent should have early made up his mind that there was a grievance in his case. It takes more than the smallest ability to rightly judge itself, and know how small the ability is. It does not soon dawn upon a man of the smallest powers and the most limited range of perception that there is anything unbecoming or immodest in his forming the most sweeping generalisations or uttering the most trenchant judgments. He, of all men in the world, is least hampered by doubts and mental difficulties. He of all persons is surest that the time is out of joint, that the constitution of society is unmitigatedly bad, or in fact that the nature of things is wrong. It is so easy to get to this kind of conclusion from many starting points. The ultimate power the servant in the parable had to reckon with was his master; to the religious mind, it is God; to the unreligious mind it is a process of nature, or perhaps the sum of the conditions of life determined by the relations of man to nature. The servant grumbles that with such a master a man can get no credit whatever he does. How often does the simple and serious Christian, perhaps at the bidding of some teacher or writer—perhaps as a result of certain of the disappointments of a struggling life—really think of his God as a 'hard man.' And the thinker who forgoes any Theistic solution of the problem of the universe seems

certain in the present day to drop from a happy optimism, or a belief at least that chances may, in an infinite series, turn out pretty evenly good and bad, to a gloomy pessimism and a conviction that this is the worst of all possible worlds. It is hardly wonderful then that the man of one talent is confident that he should fare much better in any equitable redistribution of capital; he is most apt to be clamorous about his rights and forgetful of his duties; and meanwhile he omits to husband or to exercise that individual ability by which the one talent might be turned into two; and when this is so, to whatever side of life we apply the figure in the parable, his individuality becomes of declining value in the industrial, the intellectual, or the spiritual economics of the world.

What picture shall we draw of the man with five talents? A man evidently at the higher end of the scale—first-rate ability and, in the commercial imagery of the parable, large command of capital; but how does the great trust look to the man called to make the most of it? Does he accept it as just his due, and launch out with confident ambition at once into far-reaching schemes? How many men have we known who, conscious of power, have set at nought the lessons of an experience they supposed to be applicable to no such case as theirs, have been rash when they should have been cautious, have faltered with some strange misgiving just when they should have been firm, and have had to learn through failure the need of patience and modesty, and the might of perseverance and concentration! What great endowments have we seen squandered or simply buried in the earth, because their possessor could not win the world at once—because his royal road turned out to be no short cut, and he had no heart for the common highway—the poetic, the artistic soul perhaps with its wealth all lost to the world, because the world is not all Athens, or all Florence, and allows the bard to sing unheard, the painter to paint unseen, until it seems as if the

music and the colour ran a little thin and sad—the vigour of a great intellect frittered away because the world will not take at the author's valuation some early efforts which he will not admit to have been unworthy of the importance he attached to them—the yearning heart of a great love and sympathy turning slowly cold and hard because its philanthropy will not learn the ways of prudence, and its enthusiasm cannot snap the bonds of natural law! Or is this man of five talents unconscious of his power? Is he surprised at the greatness of the trust imposed upon him? Is the sense of might, at the moment he measures himself against the task, a sudden shock of self-knowledge? The simplicity of a great genius lies in the sense of simple obedience to the call of widening duty and increasing responsibility. Every step of what may seem to others to be triumphant effort is after all but a daily willingness to do what one can. Whether the man with the five talents made his mistakes—mistakes of vanity, ambition, and presumption, including that most prevalent mistake of clever people, that of fatally under-estimating the sense, feelings, and experience of the ordinary man and woman—and learnt his lesson and had time to turn to account his disappointments and his bitterly-won knowledge of men; or whether he went on from timid acceptance to glad and full discharge of responsibility in the strength of a growing power to meet each day the day's demands—we only know that the trust was fulfilled, the full tale of increase was the profit of his labour. 'Thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold I have gained besides them five talents more.' 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

But we stand on surer ground, I think, when we try to represent in the terms of our own day the mind and character of the man of two talents. Between five and one, two is what we should call a low average; but there is this truth in it, that the difference between men does still seem to be greater on the upper side. The exceptional characters

appear to detach themselves by many degrees from their surroundings, while the steps that part the ordinary life of man from the shames, defects, and weaknesses that seem to be for ever staying the progress of the whole race are sadly few and small. Let us consider the man of very ordinary ability, with the very ordinary tasks and trusts of life. In any theoretical view—in the view of the pulpit when it talks of the world, in the political view when it talks of the elector, in the view of the theorist when he talks of public opinion—these men are blocked into great masses which are supposed roughly and for purposes of argument to be pretty uniform, to be moved by the same few considerations, to be tied up to the same interests, and limited to certain gregarious sympathies. To the man himself, to the ant in the hill, to the bee in the hive, if we may extend the analogy to the other great industrial populations of the world, the outlook is very different. He is one of a public which he pretty well understands; he is a cog in a wheel, but he knows his place. He knows his own value, but he cannot ignore the fact that those who are as valuable as himself are more than he can number. You do not expect to find in him the symptoms of wholly starved or wholly hypertrophied individuality. To revert to the parable—I should picture the man to whom two talents were allotted as neither particularly proud that he was not rated at *one* nor in any degree disgusted that he was not entrusted with *five*. He cannot but rank himself with his fellows; he knows how judgments go; it would be mock modesty for him to say he does not know his business as well as A; it would be absurd to tell him that on the spur of the moment he could change places with B. He recognises as facts—facts which theories will not easily surmount—the necessities of co-ordination, subordination, organisation, sub-division in the life of trade, in the carrying on of factory, newspaper, shop, office, farm or school. These facts do not, for him, extirpate the interest; they increase it.

There is art and generalship and diplomacy and combination in it all, which lift it in his eyes far above the spade-labour and spinning-wheel conceptions of industry to which modern fancy would revert. And to the man in this workaday world it does not by any means seem to be all wearisome sameness and monotony. Look down from some Alpine height of theory upon the industrial life of to-day, and you see only rival swarms of insect-workers, like so many ants, with no thought beyond the hoarding of next winter's food, careless who gets trodden down on the hard highway of life—certain that another will be at hand to pick up every vacant chance of work and keep up the general feverish hum of business. This is the fallacy of distant and general views. A crowd of Hindoos seems to the newly-arrived European to consist of persons who, because they are all of one colour, all in one sort of dress, are undistinguishably alike; but so does a crowd of Englishmen to the newly-arrived Hindoo. Only take the trouble to disintegrate the mass, and though you may not find in a number of men engaged in one round of work from year's end to year's end the features of a strongly marked individuality, you will find at least in distribution the qualities that stamp a nation and make it what it is. It is the average probity and respectability of the middle classes that determines the national character. All nations have to confess to the possession of classes admittedly dangerous, from which fierce outbreaks of crime or violence may be expected from time to time; and states feel that they must look at home and not reproach each other. At the other end of the scale there is a whole class of sins of wealth and luxury, vicious caprices of gilded idleness, follies of fashion—much the same to-day in London and New York, in Paris and Vienna, as they were in imperial Rome and debased Constantinople. But the nation, as it is estimated politically and socially, lies wholly between these extremes; there dwells the public opinion to which appeal is to be made,

the current judgment as to what is tolerable or intolerable, which is spoken of as the conscience of the community. This conscience may not be very sensitive and may not be wholly free from prejudice; but I venture to hold that it is marvellously right in the main, that the welfare and honour of nations depends, more than we are apt to think, upon just what the great bulk of the people accepts or rejects—what morally it cannot stand—where, morally, it draws the line—what is its unwritten, everywhere valid, common law of social and business life. Think what the uplifting by one degree of a whole people's estimate of character means! Think what wholesale depravation of life may result from the lowering by one degree of a whole people's standard of judgment as to what is honest, or what is decent!

I have used the word respectability and am ready to defend it. It is usually contemned as representing the standard of a class, and that not a very high one. I mean it in that sense, and I say that every degree in that standard, and every application of it by the class that recognises it, is of the utmost importance. The word is just now despised (largely owing to the scorn of the late Mr. Carlyle) as something to which the epithet 'smug' is justly allied; it is derided by others as connoting a conceit connected with some prejudices natural to a nation of shop-keepers. Anything good may be irreparably wronged by a sneer. I was told in America that the word 'pious' could no longer be used in a sermon because it would make people laugh. I say it is of the highest importance that workaday people, the less endowed, the men of two talents, should have a standard easily applicable, not too ideal, represented before their eyes by the lives and judgments of persons of their own class whom they know to be generally respected. In our industrial populations in the north, every one knows that there are those, of no higher station in life than themselves—in the mill, in the works, in the warehouse—whose opinion they cannot afford to despise. What they allow

is the unwritten law of the permissible; defy it, and you had better look for work elsewhere. Where there is such association of equals, such comradeship of common work and life (the very thing that you may deplore at first sight as destructive of individuality, as propagating a fashion instead of educating a faculty), there is at least a chance (and experience shews how largely this chance comes into operation) for the healthy play of good judgment upon the weak and vacillating, in a healthy deterrent from sin, if not a strong stimulus to virtue. The class that becomes dangerous belongs to no class; it is an aggregate of waifs and strays. It consists largely of those who have fallen below the standard of their former fellows, and are in revolt against a judgment they have been made to feel. They are like the 'masterless man' of the Middle Ages. They have lost reverence for any, and profess to defy the opinion of all.

But turning away from majorities, I have practically admitted that class-opinions and social standards do not sufficiently educate the moral faculty of the individual. And it is the fault—the great fault—of the individual that he is apt to think it enough if he acquiesces in them, and leaves the raising of the standard, the solemnity of individual judgment on moral issues, even the keen perception of the beginnings of evil, to his betters. In order to deal with the evils of our great cities, what we want is not so much the evidence of the police, the vicar, or the city missionary, as the indignant protest of the men and women who live daily and nightly in sight of these things, whose children are born into the midst of them. But when the duty of maintaining the right, of protesting against wrong, of rebuking the foul and the mean, falls to us individually, and we are called upon to uphold the standard of right we admit, and suppose ourselves to be zealous for, with no presence of a majority to support us, with all the misery of making ourselves unpleasant to daunt us, how many of

us fall under that apostolic rebuke about condemning ourselves in the things which we allow! Ah! where would mankind have been in the great struggles of right against wrong, of truth against falsehood, if the man of two talents had always waited for the distinguished possessor of five, if the fools had always waited for the angels!

I cannot dissociate the Parable of the Talents from that sublime Vision of Judgment which follows it—is there a page of Æschylus or of Dante so dramatic as that in moral tragedy? There judgment is held not on man's ability, but upon the use of opportunity; it turns on 'doing good to all men according as we have opportunity,' as Paul says. The answer of those on the left hand always is, 'We were quite willing—waiting in fact—but we saw no opportunity of service. We had our talents safe but they were as good as buried. When was our occasion? When was there a clear call of duty? Lord, when saw we Thee?'

And so we of the two talents leave the matter of doing good, the ministry of brotherly kindness oftentimes, for those who are more used to it, just as the idle leave the work to the busy—'they are more fitted for it, because they have had more practice'—and we fall into the condemnation of the man of one talent. We think we have our talents safe—we could use them if we liked—and lo! they are gone. We cannot do what we could have done; the tongue will not speak, the hand will not warm, the heart will not thrill. Opportunity given in increasing ratio to him who will use it; taken from him who will not! Your two talents or your one, given to him that hath the ten, for he can use them, and we no longer can. Yet there was once the same blessing for us as for him, had we only won it. 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things.'

IX.

'Jerusalem which is above.'

Altrincham.—January, 1892.

Gal. iv. 26:—'Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.'

MAN is naturally compelled to think of the unknown in terms of the known, of the Infinite in terms of the Finite. I do not think, as some philosophers do, that he has no conception whatever of things infinite or eternal, and that when he speaks of such things he only means to say they are 'very, very large,' or 'very, very long.' I believe he has conceptions that he can neither perfectly realise to himself, nor adequately explain to others, and that both in his thought and his speech he uses the concrete as a stepping stone to the abstract, consciously puts the part for the whole, and uses words as symbols, not as definitions. So we both think and speak of the Divine in terms of the human, of the spiritual in terms of the material—it being, of course, agreed between us that our common language of religion means more than it says, stands for a significance it can never literally convey; and so around the very words which fearlessly confess the limitations of human expression, there have grown, in course of time, suggestions patent to all, associations and reminders valid for each, of things 'which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into

the heart of man to conceive.' It is not wonderful that we should wish this language which belongs, as all poetry does, to the things which are abstract only because they belong to all and appeal to all, not to be hammered into prose, not to be treated as scientific description on the one hand, not to be stamped with the novelties of personal fancy on the other. It is the great benefit we derive from a venerable and commonly known religious literature that we come into the possession of a common language confessedly symbolical, full of simile and metaphor, impossible, one would think, to be mistaken for the prose of definition. In our case the Hebrew and Christian scriptures are the main source of devotional language. Every familiar symbol used by men of old, feeling after God if haply they might find Him, suggests helps by which thought rises step by step to the conception of His being, though it may be easy to take exception to each in turn either as inadequate or material, too vague or anthropomorphic—Love or Light, or Kingship or Fatherhood—to name no more, while modern talk—so desperately afraid to be unscientific about the Absolute the Unconditioned and the Great Unknowable, suggests nothing but the stultification of all religious thought. But at the same time, in speaking of things concerning which our speech must needs be symbolical, we resent every attempt to introduce a new symbolism. We find something very material or painfully realistic in all new attempts to describe the nature of God, or to paint the life of heaven, while language once just as material has come, in course of reverent usage, to be a natural vehicle of our most spiritual conceptions. Which of us would like to be challenged as to his literal belief in the language he uses or allows concerning the life to come? There are words in the Second Isaiah and in the Apocalypse of John which live in all hearts; however vague our faith, Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all; the sound of harpers harping with their harps blends restfully with the voice of many waters; but when

the authoress of 'The Gates Ajar' proposed to introduce a piano into heaven, we resented the innovation as warmly as if some cherished principle were violated.*

In the days when men spoke with more confidence of things invisible, the connection between the earthly and the heavenly was set forth in a theory of counterparts. When the Greek philosophised upon the origin of things, he placed the idea first;—the informing notion was in the creative mind, and the visible shape is what it is, is called so and so, because it reflects this antecedent idea. The form belongs to the world of ideas, the matter to this world of earth and wood and metal. It was long before the Jew could follow the Greek in conceiving that the world of real being is the world of thought, that it is the infusion into this world of archetypal ideas that differentiates and co-ordinates, and so links the finite with the infinite. The Jew required something more concrete for his more material imagination, and he thought of a collection of real things preserved in heaven, each made perfect in its way, according to the Divine mind and purpose; and of these patterns the earthly things were the more or less imperfect copies. Without understanding this, it is impossible to comprehend early Christian thought, and a great deal of Christian doctrine. In the beginning, said the Hebrew, man was made of earth, but after the image of God. Yes, says Paul, that was the first Adam, of the earth, earthy. Christ, the prototype of the new and spiritual creation, the second Adam, is the Divine counterpart of the first, retained sinless in heaven until the fulness of time, and now manifested to refashion the old Adam in us according 'to the new man who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' (Eph. iv. 24). This is obviously of doctrinal importance, but you see the same idea of counterparts recurring in much smaller matters; for example, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains that Moses not only received such

* Article in *Jewish Quarterly*, Oct. 1890.

explicit commandment as to the fittings of the Tabernacle as we find in Leviticus, when he received the law from Jehovah on Sinai, but that he was shewn the patterns which were to be copied in detail; 'See, saith he, that thou make everything according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount' (Heb. viii. 5). And again, when the seer of the Apocalypse has seen the vengeance of God wreaked to the uttermost upon an unclean and persecuting heathenism, the old earth, stained with iniquity, is done away for ever, and the old heavens, shrivelling like a parched scroll, are no more, a new heaven and a new earth, a fit dwelling for the nations of the redeemed, take their place, and the finishing touch is given to the new creation when the seer beholds 'The heavenly city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.' What would have been wanting to the heart of the devout Jew without that Zion of heavenly pattern! He had conceived of the holy city as still destined to be made the joy of the whole earth, of the nations, as the prophets had predicted, bringing their honour and glory into it; but it was not to be the old Jerusalem after all that had known change and desolation, defilement, and corruption—not the Jerusalem which prophets had denounced, over which Jesus himself had wept,—but the divine counterpart, undefiled and holy, upon which the eye of Jehovah had continually rested with pleasure. For so it had come to be thought, and when the Second Isaiah represents Jehovah as saying unto Zion, 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me,' the Rabbis rejoiced to explain that this refers to the heavenly Jerusalem, the counterpart of the earthly, a model which God kept always before Him (Isa. xlix. 16, with gloss in Taanith).

The earthly Jerusalem perished, the Roman desecrated the holy place, took away the very name beloved by Israel, and forbade the Jew even to settle among the venerated ruins. But the idea lived, the promise of the heavenly

city, the city of God, is a treasure of the world's familiar thought. It is said that after the destruction of Jerusalem, a venerable Rabbi thus addressed his fellow-exiles:—'Citizens, once of Jerusalem, in poverty, in misery, in exile, in obloquy, henceforth ye are citizens of an *idea*.' Yes, and the idea has lived! In this case, as in many others, the very doing away of the earthly counterpart has left it sublimated and refined, and the prophetic dream awaits a higher and a wider fulfilment than any former age had hoped for. In various forms the idea has remained, has grown upon us. Perfect Church, perfect State, the Kingdom of God on earth, has constantly found its appropriate and best understood expression in the old language, whether it be the Divine system of government realized on earth, as in the *Civitas Dei* of Augustine, or the Celestial City as the pilgrims' rest in Jerusalem, the happy home, as Bunyan and all the inspired dreamers have depicted it. But what I want now to point out is simply this, that through familiar imagery the ideal has constantly been brought close to the real, that it has been easy always to turn from the poor fact to the pure thought, that the moment this is done man's natural idealism sits in judgment on the actual and pronounces at once in favour of the better thing; he admits that the promise is more than the performance, and his faith rises again to be 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.'

And notice how Paul turns from the actual to the ideal, always in the interest of the higher and more liberal view. He demands allegiance to the heavenly Christ, not to the earthly, and this because even the sanctities of loving reminiscence, the personal associations which were only for the few, were a danger to the freedom of the Gospel. To rest on the thought of the departed Master, to cherish a treasured memory, the property of a little circle growing smaller and smaller as the years went on—this was to let the darkness of the world close again over the light of men

and leave the Kingdom of God to be a dwindling Jewish sect! And Paul has to protest that to dwell upon the past, to mourn the human Jesus, is to miss the significance of the revelation of the heavenly Christ, now placed in one and the same relation to all believers, the world's hope, the first-fruits of the new creation, whom all might know as a quickening spirit. So he says, 'Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more.' He is risen that we may rise; he lives, that we may live unto him; he lives in faith and hope; his law is written, not in the memory of those who heard him speak, but in the law of the spirit of life in Christ, whereby all may grow into the fulness of the stature of the perfect man. See again in the passage with which my text is connected, just the same appeal from the earthly to the heavenly. The first threatening of division in the Church came from the slowness of the little knot of disciples, gathered in Jerusalem, keeping alive their common store of memories of Jesus their Lord, to recognize a community of faith with those far off who found, outside even the barriers of that Judaism with which they themselves never intended to break, a new inspiration of life in the Christ whom Paul taught. The Gentiles, in order to believe aright, must first become Jews, they said; they must enter in by their strait gate, must put on the righteousness which is according to the law, before they could share their inheritance, and know the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus. And Paul appeals to anything that holds the language of a broad ideal, as against a traditional or personal narrowness of sympathy. To the inherited hope of Israel, the blessing of the children of Abraham, he opposes the promise that in Abraham should all the nations of the earth be blest. He turns from a petty Israel according to the flesh, to the broad conception of a true Israel of God—all who are of faith shall be blest with faithful Abraham. And from Jerusalem, the centre of national pride, now made to him

but a symbol of bondage under the law, he turns to the ideal, the heavenly Jerusalem, belonging to the realm which is that of the free spirit of Christ, reserved, not to be some day the finishing touch of a new earth prepared for a new Jewish Theocracy, but the home of all who now and here have their citizenship in heaven—'Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.'

And so constantly, not merely in warfare ecclesiastical, but in political and social struggles, the ideal sanction has won the battle for simple liberty and justice. The appeal is often made to us to have done with metaphors, to look at fact as fact, to carry on life on the practical philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number; and again and again, what our Benthams or our Mills would call mere appeal to the imagination has awakened hope, and lifted simple faith to the heights of generosity, heroism, and self-sacrifice, while calculation of expediency has scarcely sufficed to keep alive a patient effort even in the most convinced and the most right-minded. The bystander, seeing to whom the call is made for strength, for self-control, for devotion, may be disposed to consider the summons misdirected, and its language extravagant. But it is far different with the man to whom the word comes. He knows now that some one believes that the better thought of himself and what is possible to him, which has floated before him like the memory of a dream, is a spiritual fact, a thing in which to hope and trust. Was any drunkard ever converted by having it proved to him how much a year he would save if he gave up beer? I doubt it. But I know that many a fallen man has been saved by having the language of salvation brought down from the clouds and applied as a personal challenge to his own soul—by finding that this is not mere figure of speech, but absolute reality to some other soul—finding that some other (be it God or man) believes that he can be strong enough to regain his birthright as a son of God, and be worthy again

to take up the solemn trusts of duty, and apply to himself once more all better thoughts and hopes of life here and hereafter, from which he seemed to have shut himself out for ever. In the direst hour of moral conflict, it is the vision of the mental eye, fixed now on the beckoning heights above, now on the whelming depths below, that reveals to conscience the vast and solemn moment of its struggle.

The power of passing from the seen to the unseen, from the actual to the ideal, is not merely the gift of the highest imaginative genius. It may open a window for the soul in the commonest lot most 'cribbed, cabined, and confined,' and give to the busiest and most prosaic mind now and then its minutes of walking as among things invisible. To Genius, the ideal thing descends as a heavenly pattern to be wrought out for earth in poem, picture, book, system, with all the power God has lent, a pattern ever seen clearly shining through and beyond the material and the instrument in proportion as thought is loyally fixed upon the end rather than upon the means. But we all have our little bits and times of unappropriated life and interest, of abstract thought, of feeling beyond our thought, that may be lifted and guided by the hand of Genius till we too can see and hear something beyond the smoke and the din which closely hem us round. If not, to whom does Genius speak; for whom does it see and sing and paint? Is not the poet's speech the most universal language, the one that is never out of fashion, never an unknown tongue? Cut away the sense of what is beyond the daily round, banish the cloud landscape, have done with mystery, reduce our poetry to useful dates, and the language of religion to the Book of Proverbs and the Social Contract, and even the soul that never used its privileges feels poverty-stricken and vulgarized by the loss of them. The simple thought of God and His service has always risen in protest against the presentation of religion as prepared for popular acceptance by being reduced to its lowest terms. Think

you that a Christianity distilled into a 'sanctified common-sense,' an enlightened self-interest, or a belief in one God and twenty shillings in the pound, has most attraction for the tempted and the care-worn, those on whom the stress and burden of life falls most heavily? Nay, in proportion as the lonely soul faces its own problems, interprets for itself the language of religion, finds strength in a conscious relation to the unseen, and reads daily duty and daily care into a service of the Most High, it resents your effort to make religion all simple and all easy. The mysteries of God and duty are an unspent interest, making the ways of common life ever fresh and various. Old truths speak in a new symbolism, old symbols receive new interpretations, for the individual soul. Shall we quarrel about terms in the language of the touched heart? To ecclesiastical assumption of doctrinal finality, to authoritative imposition of creeds voted by man in the heat of acrimonious controversy to be the truth of God, I would oppose every weapon of historical criticism, every argument logical and legitimate. But the personal faith of another man or woman is as sacred as my own; I would not criticize its language, lest I should crush some spark of human piety, or bar some helpful resort of thought. One cannot say for another when the symbol merely hides, and does not reveal. We may agree that the stage of superstition in religion is reached when a man clings to phrases, rites or forms, which have ceased to have for him any special significance; they stand to him for nothing beyond the proper thing to say or do—they are good for this or that—but his soul draws no nourishment from them. But short of this, I think we cannot judge. We may agree that the language of religion is (as I said at the outset) not literal but symbolical. Experiences of life, influences of association—a phrase laden with a cherished thought—a word that pressed into reality at a moment never to be forgotten—these things make up the religious language of the heart which no Church

formularies exactly represent for us. Is not personal religion always eclectic? Do we not pick and choose among the treasures of symbol, imagery, phrase, similitude, which Bible and Church, prophet and poet, have bequeathed to us? Talk to your friend who goes to another church, professes another creed, than yours. How much you really have in common in the things of the spirit, its faith and hope! Yet the language of the one is somehow foreign to the other, and beyond that you discover that he cannot get a living religious association with a whole vocabulary which is natural speech to you concerning God, and Christ, and man, while to you he seems to be persistently trying to spiritualize, or to rationalize a symbolical language which has not seemed to you to be worth the effort. To walk the golden streets of the new Jerusalem, or to join the choir invisible, is imagery, all alike. But I know that figures that to me are mere figures—special images that I find it hard to spiritualize any longer—are the shapes in which visions come, and angels speak, to men and women at my side.

O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,
Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night;
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home!

X

Tannhäuser.

Altrincham.—March, 1893.

I. John ii. 15-17:—'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

THE plots of the world's stories are limited in number. Not only type but incident repeats itself in the national tradition and popular tale of many lands; the child finds that its many fairy tale books contain the same stories over and over again, with the thinnest possible disguises of identity, and some changes of names. Our folk-lore scholars are bringing fables and legends from New Zealand and South Africa to match the popular mythology of England and of Germany; and mediæval Christianity moralized into saintly history countless stories which were running their unsanctified course from generation to generation, and would not be forgotten. One of these, occurring in various forms among all the nations of northern Europe, turns upon the fate of one (child, man, or woman) who is privileged to see the revels of elves, 'good people,' or underground sprites; is attracted to join their company, and lives with them for a term of years; is restored to the life of earth, but can never be quite restored to the ordinary ways of men; has a wistful longing for the strange people

again, which becomes overwhelming; breaks away from men, and throws in his lot for time and eternity with the realm of *faërie*, the world of soul-less things. In Norse story Helgi dwells among the Trolls; in Scottish romance, Thos. of Ercildoune dwells seven years with the elfin lady of the Eildon Hill; but the touch of Christian romanticism has perfected the folk-tale into a legend of chivalry in the story of Tannhäuser, known from the place it holds in that great series of music-dramas in which Wagner has embodied the epic cycle of the Teutonic race.

That story is, in brief, as follows:—

A high and bare mountain, the Hörselberg, called also the Venusberg, rises suddenly out of the rich plain of Thuringia. On its N.W. side a cavern opens high up in its wall of rock, and from it issues a roar as of dashing water, though no stream pours forth. In old days, say the chroniclers, moans, shrieks, and laughter were heard at night from the cave, which was held by some to be a mouth of Purgatory. But another popular belief was that within the mountain, Venus, the Pagan's queen of love, still held her court in all the pomp and revelry of heathenism, and that the watcher might see forms of beauty flitting across the mouth of the cave, and hear strains of unearthly music sounding above the rush of the unseen torrent. A knight on his way to a great gathering of minstrels at the Wartburg once passed, as night was falling, the steep cliff in which is the Hörselloch cavern. His name was Tannhäuser, and he was a famous minnesinger. He saw a figure of matchless beauty beckoning him to follow her towards the cave. Nymphs scattered roses at her feet; flowers bloomed where'er she trod. He knew that it was Venus that called; he entered the cavern after her, and descended to her palace in the heart of the mountain. Seven years, spent in revelry and all the pleasures of the old heathen world, passed away; and Tannhäuser sighed for the life of common men and the simple scenes of earth. He felt he had fallen

from all Christian faith and knightly duty, and he longed to make his peace with God. He besought Venus to let him go, but she would not; he called upon the Blessed Virgin, and straightway a rift appeared in the mountain side, and he stood again above ground. While entranced with the beauty of earth and sky, the sweetness of the air and scene, so wonderful and new to one who had spent seven long years in the lamp-lit vaults beneath, the chime of a village church struck upon his ear and recalled his desire to be numbered again among the Christians and the faithful; he made his strange confession to the priest, who said that to grant absolution for a lapse so unheard of, was beyond his power; he was passed from one dignitary of the Church to another, till at last he was referred to the Pope himself. To the Pope Urban IV. he went, and to him he related with shame and sorrow the story of his fall. Urban, in horror and indignation, repelled the penitent, exclaiming 'Guilt such as thine can never be remitted. Sooner shall this staff in my hand grow green and blossom than that God should pardon thee!' Maddened by the discovery that Christianity had no hope of recovery for sin such as his, Tannhäuser fled away towards the Hörselberg, bent on going back again to the only place where a welcome awaited him. But lo! three days after the penitent was gone, the Pope discovered that his staff had put forth buds and flowers. On this divine intimation, Urban sent messengers after Tannhäuser, but they arrived in time only to learn that a way-worn man, with haggard face and bowed head, had gone up the mountain side and disappeared from view. Since then, Tannhäuser had never been seen by mortal eye.

The meaning of this pathetic story is not far to seek. It has to do with the charm which might still be exercised upon the thoughtless Christian—imbued with poetic or romantic sentiment—by the powers which spoke in the old religions of nature, by the spell of an un-moral world of

strength and beauty and pleasure. 'Love not the world'—a motto written across the whole page of Christianity in the early centuries of its existence—has not proved the easiest of precepts to obey. We should not easily find in the teachings of Jesus himself any such wholesale asceticism. We cannot conceive in him any scorn of beauty, or any doctrine that material nature is an evil thing. When, however, we come to the time which produced the Gospel and Epistles of John, we have entered upon a different stage. The first age, which thought itself the last, has passed away, the world is still lasting on, the Messiah has not returned in glory, nor the new Jerusalem as yet descended out of heaven from God. The hope of the consummation of all things is only deferred; not yet does the Christian mind—not till at least the fourth century—resolve to make the best of this world in the belief that it is going to be permanent, and that it is worth while to bring Christian precept to bear on the ordering of society. But in the meantime Christian faith seemed to have faded into a memory, its gladness of heart was gone, the Christian's life to be merely dreary watch or bitter warfare. Christianity had hurled itself into the pagan world, and shrunk into its backbone at the touch of it. While in his heart he cried, 'Where is now the promise of his coming, when all things are as they were from the beginning?'—the Christian had to live as one perpetually on guard against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Intensely deep is this consciousness of lonely service in a world all hostile, all full of ambushes and dangers for one who relaxes a moment his watchfulness or lays down his arms. The Christian was a perpetual protest against all he saw. To his eye all worldly splendours were worn thin, and likely to crack asunder in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump. The world's history is not worth knowing, for to-morrow Time may be no longer. Its deities he knows to be devils; every statue he believes to be inhabited by an actual

imp of error or seduction; the philosophy of Greece he knows to be, in so far as there is any truth in it, stolen by the devils from the inspired scriptures; the poetry of the ancient world will not move him to a smile or a tear, for he knows that, as Justin Martyr says, it is all 'uttered by the influence of wicked demons to deceive and mislead the human race.' Nay, was it not true, he often asked himself, not merely that Satan is indeed the Prince of this world, but that it was never God's? Could the pure eternal spirit fashion the material universe? Could perfect holiness have aught to do with that sensuous and sensual attractiveness which is the source of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life! That way lay Gnosticism with its doctrine of an inferior and un-moral Creator who was not the Supreme God, and here the Church warned the faithful back, and hence it goes on protesting in its creed to-day that the Primal and Ultimate God is the Creator of heaven and earth.

Year after year, the old world lingered on, and then the Christian left it. He went to the mountain or the desert; he would flee as Lot fled out of Sodom, and watch for the day of the Lord. And if he felt a doubt whether all the world of his day were doomed as surely as he thought, whether there might not after all be something fair in it—something which God had said to be 'very good'—something not all ungodly and vile in that social life he had resolutely put behind his back—he, in his solitude, must count even this doubt as a very prompting of fiends that had followed him into the desert; he would not admit that the voices of misgiving, thoughts of happiness fore-gone, dreams of friends forsaken, came from his own heart—he would not allow that his loyalty could fail—they were temptations of devils, and then there could be no doubt that it was right to stifle them all.

The persecutions of Decius increased a thousand fold the number of solitaries who sought the Egyptian deserts.

And in the third century it looked indeed as if Christianity were going to abandon all chance of influence in the world from the mere fact that every Christian who could, did abandon the society of men and rush to add one more to those crowds of hermits who were obliged to organize an associated life because the Thebaid was so full of them that they could be solitaries no longer.

What was the gain, and what the loss, in nearly three hundred years of such Christianity as this? What but intensity and concentration could have made the moral protest of Christianity against the heathen city life heard in the world—could even have preserved it as a memory and an influence! The old life, lived on the outside, cradled in nature, and adding beauty of form and fancy to the simple religion which linked man's little being with the powers that ruled and changed the scene he looked upon throughout the varied year, was to be abandoned at the bidding of a faith whose whole world was within the soul—the source, the means, the end, the reward, all not of this world, the certainties of faith declaring that the things men see and touch—the things which have been life to the whole past—are mere illusion, the baseless fabric of a vision, or mere scenes in a devil's peepshow! I am persuaded that it was the absolute, unsparing Idealism—the refusal to make any terms with the conditions of life around them—the uncompromising setting forth of the purpose of life as the keeping of body and soul without spot and blameless against the coming of the Lord—that made Christianity a power and preserved its influence to the after-ages. The Christians were few, but they must be all at one in what they meant; and they must have no half measures with themselves or the world. If the Christian's faith, instead of marking the man as apart from the world, and absorbing all the forces of his life, had only produced a change of thought, a difference of view, a modification of habit, would it have survived the eras of persecution? It would perhaps have

contributed a form of eclecticism or of comprehensive philosophy among the enlightened—would have added to the number of those who were willing, as Antoninus Pius was, to set an image of Jesus in their oratories by the side of Orpheus and Aesculapius, or were willing to pray to the God of Abraham, if they might pay their devotions too, to the Sovereign Sun, or be initiated into the latest mystery from Egypt or Syria. Eclectic religion, too broad to be deep, carried with it no moral redemption, no gospel of purity, no contact with God in the realm of conscience; it could not make a man of the slave, or ennoble womanhood, or hallow childhood, or teach a world to be chaste. You may call the Christianity of the age I have been describing, exaggerated, or mutilated, or fanatic, but it could do all these things. Can any man read or hear the words of my text to-day without feeling that they call him to judgment as to his daily habits, his secret thoughts, his external relation to the things that pass away, and his innermost relation to the things that abide for ever? And the loss? While without were fightings and within were fears—while the Christian's daily conflict was to keep himself unspotted from the world, to hold on to that grace whereby he was saved—he had no eyes for that grace of God which makes glorious from day to day the heavens above and the earth beneath. In vain to him did the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shew His handywork. You may look in vain through the volumes of the early Christian writing, in the East at least, for any echo of the Psalmist's joy in the starry sky, the trees of the Lord, this great and wide sea. That this present world was a revelation of the Divine was not dreamed of in his philosophy. No wonder that there was loss—loss only to be compensated for after many centuries, and in spite of dominant conceptions of Christianity—in that view of nature and life which was bred in solitude, nurtured in the desert, and which lived in a world which had ceased to be

God's, and was subject to devils innumerable. Not only was the social temper lost—not only did an over-bearing personality, a dogmatism that denounced all difference as criminal, all doubt as devil-born, enter into the whole of ecclesiastical proceedings—but, as I was saying before, the whole of the power which the old religions had wielded—the power to wed natural emotion with the thought of the immanent Divine—was, of set purpose, foregone. Did you feel some awe at the weird gloom of a cavern, at the rush of a mountain stream, at the solemn depth of some ancient forest? These are the fortresses of those demons whom the benighted heathen has called gods—and there some Siren-charm may still bewitch the mind that is not ready with its anathema and its 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' Expel a natural emotion, and it is sure to come back. The gods whom Christianity, when it became the religion of the Roman world, had officially banished, lived still in the popular mind, in its folklore and legendary mythology. The deities of their ancestors lived as sprites with whom the Christian might have no innocent dealings, in the mind of the Scandinavian and Teutonic peoples, and the whole romance of fairyland bore witness to the permanence of the joyous conception of the life of nature. The whole gruesome horror of witchcraft for ages and ages bore witness to a demonology which Christianity had taught only too well. And until Christianity in our day has learnt at the bidding at once of poetry and science, a wider conception of God and nature, will there not be something like the same inconsistency between the creed of the Church and the whole realm of sentiment and imagination in which a large part, and not an unworthy part, of our life is lived largely at the bidding of that culture which has set itself to perpetuate a sympathetic understanding of the Greek mind as a necessary balance to the Biblical or Puritan side of our English training. We can gladly make room for that classical romanticism :—

'The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The power, the beauty, and the majesty
That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain,
Or forest by slow stream or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and watery depths ; all these have vanished ;
They live no longer in the faith of reason!
But still the heart doth need a language, still
Doth the old instinct bring back the old names,
And to yon starry world they now are gone,
Spirits or Gods, that used to share this earth
With man as with their friend ; and to the lover
Yonder they move, from yonder visible sky
Shoot influence down ; and even at this day
'Tis Jupiter who brings whate'er is great
And Venus who brings everything that's fair.'

We live in presence of a Christianity which is ready, as never before, to take account of man in society, with the needs and exigencies of his present condition ; to respect the natural without relinquishing the ideal ; to see in the universe, in the world and that vast conception of worlds and systems beyond ours which science has revealed, the motives for a vast expansion of its thought of God and divine action. But are we not in presence too of a strangely frank and outspoken heathenism, a revolt from Christianity as a mere social form, which is bent on returning to the love of the world, a love not chastened or purified, but running direct into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life—a grossness unredeemed by any such glamour of poesy and old-world sentiment as led Tannhäuser to follow the fleeting goddess to her home within the Venusberg—a hard selfishness which would repel, were it not that it appeals to half the workaday motives of common life—taking your turn, having as much right as anybody else, which brands all self-denial as morbid individualism, and

proclaims the social sinner to be more worthy than the lonely saint, and so forth. To speak of a conscious disloyalty to higher knowledge, of faithlessness to conscience, may seem vain where allegiance has already been defiantly renounced. But our legend may comfort us a little. Tannhäuser may sigh for the purer air after seven years of revelry ; the prodigal will come to the husks and bethink him of his father's house, Urban's staff may blossom when the Church's anathema has fallen from his lips. God's redeeming forgiveness will not always be recognized too late. The mountain side may not close over Tannhäuser again. The Father marks the returning prodigal while yet a great way off, just when you and I are sure he never will return. Amen.

XI.

Daniel's Window.

Manchester College.—December, 1910.

Daniel vi. 10:—'And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.'

THERE are stories in this book of Daniel that have doubtless been favourites with us from our childhood. There is no reason why we should put them away, but there is much reason why we should read them with understanding.

The book of Daniel has been the subject of many controversies. But nobody regards it now as an actual history of the period of the Captivity. Its place in our Bible is misleading; it stands as first among the Minor Prophets, but it is evidently later than all the books which follow it. The Jews do not put it among the Prophets at all. It came into prominence after the great canonical scriptures, called collectively, 'The Law and the Prophets,' had been closed. They put it into the miscellaneous collection called 'Writings,' of various dates and values. The book itself shews that the Captivity period had in the writer's day become an era of romance, as does the book of Esther, purely fictitious, which had immense vogue among Jews in the period immediately preceding the time of Christ. Modern research seems to have proved first, that all the history which professes to be history in the book of Daniel about the Captivity and the fall of Babylon, turns out to be

wrong; and secondly, that all the history that is given as prediction slightly veiled under the devices of vision and apocalypse, is recoverable and is quite right; and this history runs down to the year B.C. 164, the end of the great struggle of the Maccabees against the efforts of Antiochus of Syria to wipe out all national characteristics and observances, and in fact to extirpate the ancestral religion of Israel. Hence the key-note of the book is steadfastness under persecution, open or covert, and loyalty both national and religious. And yet more. We can understand how such books as Daniel and Esther became popular among the scattered Jews (the Dispersion) in the Greek and Asiatic towns and the Mediterranean sea-ports; they exemplify the triumphs of Jewish virtue, and Jewish astuteness among alien peoples who persecute at first but afterwards appreciate and admire. Daniel becomes a viceroy, Esther a Persian Queen, without any sacrifice of race or religion. This is the lesson for the Jews of the Dispersion.

But was Daniel a real person? He is not mentioned outside this book save in Ezekiel, who twice brackets together Noah, Daniel and Job as typical righteous men. I suppose that as Ezekiel was a prophet of the Captivity, it was assumed that Daniel, unknown from any other source, was a contemporary of his. It may well be that the stories of Daniel's loyalty had an existence before the visions were added. There was an evident tendency to group adventures around the person of Daniel as in the histories of Susannah, and Bel and the Dragon; but the older stories are by far the best—and from one of these I have taken my text—and I would read in it exactly what the Jew in a strange land among strange worships was intended to read in it in the second century before Christ. The story is known to everybody. Daniel's enemies, unable to bring any successful charge against him, lay a trap to catch him on the side of his religion. Daniel knows all about it,

but will not alter anything. He will not even keep his window shut at his hours of prayer; he throws open the casement (projecting, with lattices opening outwards); everything as he did aforetime.

We live at a time when there is some need again to speak about fidelity to religious convictions. We admire it in all typical instances—we praise the heroic constancy of the early Christians, Jesuit missionaries, Marian martyrs, under torture and in lingering death. But the moment of relaxation brings its dangers. Tertullian has to complain that, given a time of peace, the Christians cease to live at that height of moral discipline, of aloofness from the world and its concerns, in which the martyr spirit is born and nurtured.

The earliest Council of the Christian Church of which the records have come down to us, was concerned with concessions made to pagan custom, involving some little declension from the strictness of separation between the Christian and his neighbours. Now with us it is the case of the Liberal Christian who does not want to be churlish, and the neighbour who is willing to take all his concessions but not to understand his principles.

It was a great help to the Puritan and to the Quaker when the very cut of his coat marked him as a man whom one would not ask to do this or that, when it would obviously be not friendly to ask him to do things which his people were known to protest against. But now the question of friendly concession comes before each of us individually; scruples are things of the past, and it is not good form, if you entertain any, to say so. There is a kind of comprehension that is not religious equality. It seems to be the cross of the Liberal Dissenter in the present day that his position is regarded as an innocent eccentricity, which it would be impolite to mention, as it would be to call attention to a cast in his eye or his taste in neck-ties. Why when every opportunity is given you of concealing the fact that you are a Quaker or a Unitarian, do you persist in making it known? Why open your particular window just now when all the rest of the street is shut?

This kind of tone or atmosphere renders religious and moral sincerity much more difficult for young people than it used to be. They were ready to stand up for the religion and for the daily practice of their homes when challenged, and to defend them against slights and misrepresentations. But it is the implied assumption—'We are really all one; if you will accept the situation with the same ease as we do, and not make any fuss about it,'—applied to all things from church-going to card playing or betting, that makes the difficulty for the young to-day. It is hard that the whole duty of individual protest, of hesitating explanation, of shrinking unwillingness, should be suddenly thrown upon the young conscience. But such is life. You never know when the moment in which the only thing for you is to deliver your soul will come. But often, if you are not blind, you see the crisis looming ahead, and you know there are things you have no business to be near. There are things like gambling and betting on games at which you can draw a line which is, I am glad to say, more and more respected. But there are social moments which put questions to you alone. Can you stand light speaking of religious convictions altogether? Can you stand empty ridicule of things which are serious to you in your heart of hearts? Are you going to stand any of these things because somebody is kind enough to say, 'We know you are a Dissenter, but if you do not care to mention it, we will not'? I believe that nobody, not even the man of emptiest head, has any respect, even any liking, for one who accepts such a situation. I believe that the weakest and most flabby souls catch a certain stimulus and an incipient self-respect from the man who says bluntly, 'I am not going in with this lot,' however they may snigger at him. The moment arrives when conven-

tions may not hold you. You must open your window, no matter who is on the watch to see and talk about it.

Is there another quite insidious form in which we are apt to concede more than we ought? 'You are Liberals, and take a wide view; you understand the position of those from whom you differ. You will see that we cannot yield, while you can. Therefore,' says your prospective son-in-law, 'of course you will let your daughter be married at Church, because my people could not go to a Chapel service. And of course you will let her be re-baptized, because it means something to us, and does not mean anything to you.' I think we are come to a pretty pass when these things are—and they are.

But to revert to our story, which speaks to us of Religious Conviction expressed in, and supported by Religious Observance.

Daniel in his crisis went straight back to his religious habit—'he prayed three times a day with his window open, as he did aforetime.' It was his own personal religious rule. There was nobody of his religion—no priest, or rabbi, or synagogue ruler, to censure him if he had chosen just quietly to drop it. Happy are those who have made and keep spaces in their daily lives, where in a calm induced by habit, the waters of life clear themselves, resolution finds its highest sanctions, the issues of life are seen with a seeing eye, the things of the day stand for a moment aloof, and the things of the spirit are real again!

You think this is so, people say, of daily prayer or weekly services; but it is mere habit. But habit of this sort is good, if it be rationally adopted; and if it rationally justifies itself—yea, more, if what may have been imposed as habit becomes, under the pressure of outward things with the bondage of routine and the incidence of life's burdens, the very charter and guarantee of your soul's liberty, the daily reminder that the issues of your life are in God? To put it on a lower ground, is it not a good thing to go

back from the fuss and hurry of daily work for bread to certain fixed points of personal life? For instance, a man who in the rush of business forfeits family meal-times does not think what he loses; he is apt to become a mere acquaintance to his children and a sort of lodger in his own household.

And as to stated religious observance:—there are those who think that such things are very good for somebody else, but they themselves do not require such reminders and forms. Such persons are of many sorts and I do not wish to judge them in a lump. But to some who are apt to say, 'Why should I be supposed to want to think of religion at a fixed hour on a certain day?' who rejoice in freedom and enlightenment to a degree that thinks it can dispense with habits and observances—I am inclined to oppose my own experience. I am conscious that my having long ago voluntarily undertaken to think about religion as my business in life has had much to do with making me as religious as I am; that relaxation of religious observance dissipates religious interests, and somehow leaves life without its fixed points of self-collection and knowing what spirit one is of; that things which for years have gathered around Bible reading, and hymn and prayer—all sorts of associations and memories that are of the tissue of life—drop away when these voices cease, and leave one inexpressibly the poorer.

And this leads me straight to my third point, for in this religious observance of Daniel's there was a large element of religious sentiment; he opened his window towards Jerusalem, his old home and the Holy City of his faith. 'Nonsense'—one of his Chaldæan critics may have said—'Jerusalem is hundreds of miles away across pathless deserts; for all he knows he may be looking out of window straight at Sodom or Gomorrah.' No matter; with the mind's eye it was Jerusalem he saw—a Holy City—inhabited by the sort of good people one used to know when

one was young, a home of ancestral faith and simple pieties, an old home of the soul.

Sentiment is personal; we cannot quite explain ourselves in this matter, nor do we expect others to understand us wholly. Yet there is common ground in dependence on memory and association. We understand that each may carry a heart's treasure of this sort—sanctions of life that have not been matters of rule and lesson, but have silently come from the fact that we have known sweet influences and gentle souls. These enter into life and circulate like the blood in our veins. It is not your reason but yourself that rises in wrath when these sanctities are violated. An appeal to them catches us on the side of our widest sympathies, and opens the heart to ready helpfulness. Remember Orlando's appeal to the banished Duke:—

'If ever you have looked on better days,
If ever been where bells have knolled to church,
If ever sat at any good man's feast,
If ever from your eyelids wiped a tear,
And know what 'tis to pity and be pitied,
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be.'

And the Duke's reply, in which he seems to be telling off as beads in a rosary the scenes and associations that these words have waked in his own mind:—

'True is it that we have seen better days,
And have with holy bell been knolled to church,
And sat at good men's feasts, and wiped our eyes
Of drops that sacred pity hath engendered.
And therefore sit you down in gentleness,
And take upon command what help we have.'

There is a tendency to say that the religion of early years must be put away as a childish thing, that to let yourself be influenced by sentiment born of memory and association is to steer by your own wake. But when you

cannot take an observation it is something to have a wake to steer by. And so it is in human conduct. All the things that are generous, gentle, honourable are not enforced upon you by argument (either by yourself or others) at this moment or that; they are things that come out of character and out of the way in which character has been built—built by the unseen factors that lift it bit by bit like the making of a coral island. And there are times, such as I have already spoken of, when you cannot take an observation—crises that overtake you, choices that have to be made on the spur of the moment, seeming perhaps too trivial and too casual to call for the deliberation of moral judgment, things that have to be dealt with at once with no time for ethical valuation, yet things that you know in your heart are not indifferent; to do this or that you feel would be inconsistent with a whole range of motives and preferences and avoidances which you respect within yourself, and know to belong to the better part of you. Never lightly violate an understanding you have with yourself. Others may try to argue you out of it, but your compunction is based on a true sentiment. Conscience is the safeguard of character, and sentiment is the safeguard of conscience. Such sentiment is matter of feeling, and such feeling has to do not with things enforced on you by argument, but with things that you have felt to be generous, gentle, honourable, lovely, and you may not put yourself, for a temporary pleasure, out of the line of this your private tradition, which as the years go on, will be for you the best interpreter of life. You can trust this sentiment when it wakes in you an intuitive repugnance for suggestions (of others or of your own mind) that at once, when in contact with such sentiment, reveal themselves as petty, unhandsome, selfish, unworthy. But there is another side to this; there are cases when feeling runs ahead of reflection, and annexes to itself things that reveal themselves as good before you have weighed and appraised them—

things of beauty in art or speech, thoughts that seem to drop into a mind waiting for them—personal relations that join on to a range of memories and associations that you have perhaps never consciously sorted together, and fall into line with them—men and women who, before you know why, take their places in that company of the shining ones who are the guardian angels of your life.

I have had such happy experiences; may you have them too. Amen.

XII.

Samplers:

A Sermon to Children.

Altrincham.—November, 1892.

Heb. viii. 5:—'See that thou make all things according to the pattern.'

AN amusing writer, Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, tells us that he once had to write an article and could not think of a subject. He racked his brains in vain, and at last turned in despair to his landlady, and asked her to help him with a suggestion. The good woman, after some thought, suggested 'Samplers' as a subject which, in her opinion, had not received in the world of letters that recognition which it deserved. Mr. Jerome would have nothing to do with it; but as in this age the preacher must often content himself with gleaning after the man of letters, I will pick it up, and 'Samplers' shall be our subject for this morning.

I doubt if the young people of the present day know what a sampler is. I do not think I have seen a girl making one for years and years. You may perhaps find one in an old work-box at home, but it is rather more likely to be your grandmother's work than your mother's. But in many a farmhouse and cottage you will see a sampler framed and hung up among the household gods of the family. It is a great sample of needlework, especially of letters and figures which are to be used for marking linen with the needle. You will see first the large alphabet, then the

small, then the figures; then probably a good text like 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' and then at the bottom the name of the proud artificer—'Ann Smith, aged eleven years.' I remember something more ambitious than this, dating from the time when needlework was cultivated as a fine art. In an old nursery among the great family portraits which were pierced all over with the arrows which my uncles, in their irreverent youth, used to shoot at these ancient worthies, there hung a frame containing a mysterious composition in tapistry-work on a ground of what had once been white satin. The colours were all faded, but I believe it had once illustrated the story of Abraham's intention to sacrifice his son Isaac, with two or three scenes represented as at various distances in the same picture, as was the wont in old Bible plates. I only remember a shadowy figure of Abraham, and the much more substantial shape of a fine rabbit in the fore-ground (I hope it is not possible that it was meant for the ram) feeding in happy unconsciousness of the tragedy which is proceeding in his immediate neighbourhood. But it is of the sampler, and more useful kind of sampler, that I am going to speak—I say more useful, because I have often seen the sampler taken out and studied when household marking has to be done—the old lady wants to make the letters as well as she did when she was 'aged eleven years,' and it will not do for this purpose to have the sampler framed in glory on the wall; she wants to see the *back* of it, for there the real art of joining the letters and doing a whole word on one thread, is to be traced and recovered. So the true sampler stays in the work-box, ready to be referred to at any time.

Now the first lesson of the sampler is this, that every bit of work *done as well as you can do it* is useful to you all your life. I do not mean that you will, all your days, do things just as you do them now; I do not mean that when you have done a thing well, you are (so to speak) to frame and

glaze it, and be content to live on the credit of it ever after. There are people who are just like that—people to whom an early success seems to have been fatal; who, persuaded that they could do anything if they tried, because they once did something well, have left off trying, and in consequence cannot now do what they did once, nor can they do anything else. This is apt to be the way with juvenile prodigies, and infant phenomenons, with children who are shown off by silly parents, sometimes too by silly schoolmasters. It is very sad when a child is started in life by being made vain and conceited, and the process of taking the conceit out of him or her is unpleasant. But it is very sad indeed when this process does not take place, and the child becomes a young man (or a young woman) still supposing that the world at large is going to think him (or her) just as clever as the people at home used to do. But happily, in general, before school life is over, boys and girls learn to think soberly of themselves, and know how to compare their abilities honestly with those of others. Boys, for instance, see another who is said at an early age to have quite a genius for Greek or Latin, and who in consequence thinks it rather beneath the level of a genius to do plodding work—beaten in the long run by another boy who has no genius but a genius for taking pains. Girls know very well that there is no certainty that one who can play the piano 'very well for a girl of twelve,' will play very well for a girl of sixteen. There is in each case a *promise*, which, with care, with doing your best with the abilities given you, may be brought to fulfilment in power and beauty. But you read the promise all wrong—you make the worst use of the beginnings of ability given you—if you take it to mean that you can do without work, that you can idle while others are learning, because you can, for a time, work faster, or learn more readily then they do.

But to go back to our sampler; it is a bit of careful work; it stands for time, and patience, and accuracy. I say that

to have done at some time in your life a piece of work of that sort is always useful. Not only for the training it gives in those qualities which alone can make you steady and sure in any other work you undertake, but also because it gives you a good heart for that other work, to think that you have done a bit that took some doing; you feel that you have a bit of a record, and that you must not fall short of it. That is the real good of prizes at school, I think. The good is not in the competition; I do not think it does A any good to have beaten B and C, and I think it often does B and C harm to have been beaten; but it is good to have put in a bit of steady work for a definite object; the prize is a kind of chalk mark to which you have worked up, and from which you can measure on again. When I was a small boy we used to have Good Conduct prizes at one school I was at, and I think we always rather despised them. And I fancy the reason was that they did not represent any definite effort at all. A boy does not want a prize for being an inoffensive young creature—and that was what it amounted to. Nobody imagined that these prizes sent our young souls into paroxysms of virtuous effort; their effect was purely negative; they were rewards for not being a nuisance. A prize worth getting means that you have used some resolution, some self-control, some prolonged attention; that you are getting out of the view that school is a mere necessary evil, and into the view that there is some *worth-while* in study. And this is more purely the case with the *degrees* which are the rewards of advanced study at the universities—more purely, I say, because the element of *reward* is not so present in them. They stand for the fact that the young man (and nowadays the young woman) who has obtained a degree, has submitted to a course of methodical training—has given time and effort, made some little sacrifice of inclination and of pleasure—gone without some parties, and recreations, and novel reading, and perhaps pleasant summer holidays, in

order to do a definite piece of work within a certain fixed time; and that upon certain days in a certain year he could shew a definite result in knowledge not merely gone through, but capable of being produced again with accuracy when called for. So a degree is just a kind of sampler. Yet it does not at all follow, for instance, that I can do to-day what I could do years ago when I took my last degree; not at all; I should have to look up my books again for a long time, if indeed I could now do it at all, just as the old lady who keeps the sampler in her work-box looks now and then to see how she did, once upon a time, join those letters at the back of the canvas. But I can do many things I could not do then, and I know that whatever power I have of doing them is closely connected with the fact that at one time in my life, I was bent with all my might upon doing some quite different things as well as I knew how. No work is thrown away in this life; what you gain is not merely knowledge, but power; and that is a thing you can turn in many directions and apply for different ends. And if you have done one good piece of work, you can do another.

That is *the lesson of the sampler*. You must not do a careless piece, now that you have shown that you can be careful and precise. You must not be content with a second-class if you have once been in the first. You must not say 'this or that does not matter,' when you have a character with yourself to keep up. While my old lady has the sampler in her work-box with the letters done right and straight, and *knows she herself did them so*, she cannot for very shame be content to mark her linen with letters faulty in shape and not straight in a line. And so you, if you have done in your lives a piece of honest work, cannot for shame see yourselves reduced to cribbing and scamping. You cannot let yourselves off; you may be excused by others, but you must know that you ought not to excuse yourselves, when you scrape

through lessons and duties, and trust to luck, or kindness, or the chapter of accidents, and know in your hearts that you have nothing else to trust in. The worst thing that can happen to you in youth is to get the notion that it is *not worth while to do your best*, that careless work, half preparation, half truth, half goodness, in fact, will do, every now and then, just as well. It never will; if others do not know the difference, you do. You need only remember the sampler—in your case the good lesson, the hard fight to get the day's work done in the day, the little bit of self denial, the little bit of difficult truth-telling. Then you know that (whenever once you have done the right thing) to feel that you have knowingly or intentionally come short of it, is to incur shame and confusion, to take the lower road, to turn your back on the better way that was there for you. And that is unfaithfulness to God, who has made you to know what it is to be right and true. Nothing is so common (alas!) as to hear those who know they are not doing their best, complain that they would have done much better *if they had had the chance, if they had had the time*; and they never will have the chance or the time if they do not make up their minds to make it for themselves. And they go through life, always disappointed with themselves, and always excusing themselves. It is never their fault. The saddest thing is, when they settle down into the belief (in which no one who has ever done an honest piece of work can find any comfort) that, as the world is now, it is not worth while, and it does not pay to use the old labour, the old self-denial, the old spirit of not being beaten, which once they could put into their work. If they remember any honest good work which they ever did, this, like the old sampler in the work-box, rises up in judgment against them.

I remember when the first cheap, vulgar advertising shop was opened in an ancient western town. It was covered with placards and bundles of things like pots and pans and

brushes, hung on nails from roof to pavement—a hideous eye-sore in a beautiful street. I was a boy then, and I remember an old gentleman saying to me, 'A wonderful cheap lot of things, to be sure; but there is something a little wrong with every one of them.' Now imagine the mental and moral state of the man who sells that sort of thing—a knife that he knows will not cut, a saucepan that he knows will crack, a scrubbing-brush that will split the first time it is wetted, a washing-tub that is kept together by the glazing, a tea-pot of which the handle will come off the moment boiling water is put into it—and all this is to be excused, because the things are cheap. Never to be able to say, 'This is as good as any in the trade, as good as I can make, or as I can buy!' And yet people go through life, passing off work not quite honest, service not quite faithful, speech not quite true, religion not quite sincere, philanthropy not quite unselfish—it is cheap, and it is not worth while to have it better! But perhaps you do not understand this, my dear girls and boys, and I am glad if you do not. But I mean that you are like that shopkeeper I am speaking of, if through life you are passing off things that you know not to be your best. And in your youth you are acquiring one habit, or another, either the habit of trying to do your best, to make all things according to the pattern of goodness, honesty and thoroughness, or the habit of scamping things (as it is called), of considering not what you ought to do, but only what will just do to avoid notice or blame—how to get half-done lessons, cribbed exercises, half-hearted work, accepted without getting you into trouble. And if you cultivate this latter habit instead of the former, you will go on shambling through life with an excuse always ready in your mind or on your lips, afraid of being found out, which is the most miserable state a man can live in; never quite coming up to your word, never quite fulfilling your promise, professing all sorts of good things and good intentions, which, like the wares at

the cheap shop, have got something a little wrong with every one of them.

The samplers that may be useful to us through life are not only those of our own making. They go down as heirlooms, and the young girls of several generations may learn from the same old pattern. We are not dependent upon ourselves only for the things which make us take the upward way, and strive towards that which is noble and perfect. We copy without thinking of it the lives, the manners, the speech and even the thoughts of the people who are about us from day to day. Be thankful especially for homes where what you learn by the silent methods of example is good and pure. But besides these are great and good lives which stand out to all of us as patterns, on which we should, with knowledge and resolution, strive to frame our purposes and conduct. A sampler is the English, I take it, for an Exemplar, which means a pattern or model. You have often, I dare say, heard Jesus Christ called our Great Exemplar, and the stress of all Christian preaching lies in this—'Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ.' And there are thousands of others, many of whom you may know something of in books—some of whom it may be your happiness to know in life—who have followed Jesus in the path of high endeavour and of devout obedience, hearing the same call to earnest service :—

Other brethren who before ye
  On this self-same pathway trod,
Heard sweet music lingering on it
  Echoes of the voice of God.
And though low at first, and feebly,
  Did they catch the heavenly strain,
Yet it nerved them to the combat,
  And the struggle was not vain.

* * * *

And they saw that flowers were hidden
  In the thorny path they trod;
And they felt they had a Father,
  And they knew that He was God.

And these are they whom we commemorate in our prayers with gladness of heart; for whom, with all other God's happy servants, we laud and magnify His glorious name; humbly beseeching that we may have grace to follow their blessed examples. Amen.

XIII.

Confirmation Address.

Delivered at the Dedication of the Young in Hope Street Church, Liverpool.—January 15, 1882.

I AM not going to attempt to give an answer to the question, 'What mean ye by this service?' for I doubt whether it means precisely the same thing to every one of you. It is a *Confirmation* service, but not in the sense that *we* formally admit you to a church-fellowship from which you might otherwise be excluded, or certify as to the correctness of your religious education. It is a Confirmation service in the sense that you consciously seek with God's help to confirm and establish yourselves in every good faith, habit and resolve; that you, having reached a point in life where the future of your career begins to open before you—where you catch some glimpse of the work and the responsibility, of the cares and troubles, of the joys and pleasures, too, which coming days hold in store for you—desire to view these things, and meet them as they come, with a deeper sense of their moral and spiritual significance, a stronger will, a surer trust, than you have known before. But I cannot assume that to-day is to mark the beginning of the religious life for any of you. The sense of God, which unites itself so sweetly with the strangeness and wonder of a young life, has not, for you, quite withdrawn into the dimness of the past. You have been born into a faith, the full meaning of which you may not yet have realised. But words of hymn and prayer, familiar to the ear from early childhood, have found some application for themselves in the experience of your lives,

and the thoughts and deeds of the holy and the good have had power to make your hearts burn within you. Some of you have found God in the brightness of an unclouded life, and have rejoiced in the clear shining of His presence; others have found Him even nearer in the still hours of sorrow, and in the shadow of death—a very present help in time of trouble. I pray you, collect and treasure in loving memory all thoughts and intimations of God's presence with you which your early years have known; the struggles of school-days, earnest and real as any—your strivings to cleave to things true and right in matters that look simple now, but were not easy then—even the heats and shames of youthful penitence—do not put these away as childish things. In them are found the roots of that personal faith which the experience of the most ordinary life may teach to the unsullied conscience and the feeling heart, which alone can truly interpret to your own souls the discipline by which God may lead you, and which no book or teacher can adequately supply. In days 'bound each to each by natural piety,' the lesson of the Lord is most truly written for each of you. True, some of you may see only a little before you some break in the continuity of your lives, and some of you may have already entered on the tasks and duties which belong to manhood or womanhood. You feel that your lives are, for good or ill, more in your own hands to make or mar than they used to be. Obedience to the precept, or compliance with the wish, of those you love must give place to consciously-held principle of self-determination and self-government. You must learn to walk alone. Duty must find you more self-reliant, responsibility must find you more serious and more firm. From year to year the issues of your life become more solemn, faults harder to amend, mistakes more fatal, errors more irretrievable. But I doubt if the feeling that this is so, even when the feeling is unmistakably present, does of itself bring with it the more watchful eye, the more

active conscience, the more prayerful spirit, the stronger soul. We do not, by mere lapse of time, or by the necessity laid upon us of fighting the battle of life, of bearing its burdens, and meeting the changes that are sure to come, grow into the *religious life* as a matter of course. We do not find the help of God, the promptings to devotion and self-sacrifice, the power to suffer and be strong, the purifying uses of adversity, just because others have found them before us. On the contrary, independence may make us wilful; the experiences of life may only make us hard and shrewd; its successes may make us boastful, and its reverses dogged. Our sympathies may dwindle away, our thoughts become more selfish, and the business-aspect of our career may banish the generous impulses and emotions that could carry us out of self, until we seem left to ourselves to stand or fall, in a sordid, godless world; the aspirations that once were ours have sighed themselves away into emptiness; the thoughts of God, the tokens of His living presence, the moments when He seemed to guide and cheer, have all died away into the haze of a scarce-remembered past, and the 'heaven that lay about us in our infancy' has faded into 'the light of common day.' Your words uttered to-day mean, my friends, that you resolve that, with God's help, it shall not be so with you. In the simple facts of childhood's religion, roots may have been struck of a spiritual faith which shall flourish alike in sunshine and in storm and be a tree of life unto you. It is God's husbandry; a cedar of Lebanon which He hath planted. If this is so with you, you will avoid those shocks and breaks of religious experience which contribute so much to the misrepresentation of religion in our day as the weakness of an undisciplined character, and which often make it seem to be a spirit of fear, instead of a spirit of knowledge, of love, and of a sound mind. If now, from day to day, your earliest, simplest prayer has power to bring God to your mind, and to set a barrier between you and the snare,

the temptation, the sin that so easily besets you—if, as you move away from the home-circle, you feel that your father's and mother's God is with you still, and His over-arching presence can make the strange place, with its new difficulties or, it may be, its new attractions, none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven to you, in the moment of your solitary cry unto Him—if home-thoughts can keep alive in you your olden heart, and the love that yearns after you from afar can draw it upward to Him who holds all alike, the near and the distant, the living and the dead, in His gracious keeping—then, you need not be anxious if your religion lack some of those marks which men have been apt to think necessary characteristics of a lively faith. You may not know those keen alternations of ecstasy and despondency, of assurance and despair, which come to those who have been driven by the crises and disappointments of life to turn again and seek a God whom they had forgotten and forsaken. You may not know the satisfaction of those who think they know God, because they know the definition of Him in which some ancient men embodied their speculations. But you will have a faith in Him as a living presence to which all the events of your life will contribute their testimony; a faith yielding, even through pain and travail of soul, increase of courage and of patience. In Him you will find not only a shelter from the storm, and a shadow from the heat of life, but a cherished companionship throughout the uneventful course of busy days. Changes will pass over you—changes of circumstance and surrounding, and changes of thought and of the inner scenery of your being. But if only you have been careful, from stage to stage, to build up character in the light of distinct consciousness, to see that no carelessly-acquired habit gains power to stifle and pervert your conscience, and that no fashion of thinking or believing is adopted merely because it is a fashion—then, I believe, the old trust may remain unim-

paired, nay, more, may go from strength to strength, and no darkness without or perplexity within shall have power to silence the song of cheerful faith—O God, my heart is fixed, trusting in Thee.

But your religious *beliefs* will change. The faith of early life must, *on its intellectual side*, pass through many phases on its way to maturity. It would be but a poor and feeble growth, swayed at the mercy of the shifting winds of doctrine, if it did not. But your own experience, your own thought, your own battle with difficulty and doubt, and your slowly-gained power of reproducing in your own mind and your own life the word and spirit of teachers great and good, must lead you from step to step in the task of planting the mental bases of belief, and applying the constant inspirations and sanctions of religion in new spheres of action and of duty. *Opinion*, lightly adopted, is lightly laid aside; do not confound its phases—nay, do not confound the failure of even earnest efforts of the understanding to search out the Almighty to perfection, or justify the ways of God to man—with an obscuration or a total eclipse of man's faith in God. If only you keep your heart with all diligence, if only you regard the voice of a living conscience, if only you live as under the eye, and as pledged to the service of an infinite love, then, though the words in which you express these things may change, and your old thoughts about them seem incorrect or poor, you will not pass beyond the charter of your free self-dedication to-day.

You have this day pledged yourselves to no *theories*. You promise to hold fast that which you know to be good. You are sure that the future, however dim its course may be before your eyes, has mainly to do with the same great facts which you have known in your own lives and those of friends around you. Their forms, and the combinations in which they are presented, may vary for each of you, but they are all 'common to man.' Through this future there lies before you all the old way of duty, not always clear

and plain, but such that those who conscientiously strive to go, just from step to step, always forward, will always find a foothold; in it you will find those same demands upon your love and patience, which have even now revealed to you the true worth of your lives in the knowledge that they are not all your own; you will hear within and about you those same voices of God and His beloved ones, which have had power to call your thoughts away from the seen to the unseen; you will have, in trial or sorrow, the same God as your refuge, and the everlasting arms beneath you still. But you feel that to grow more sensible of these realities, to hold them closer to your heart amid the experiences of mature life, is necessary to the true development of your highest powers, and the true life of the *soul*—that there is that in you which is able to look beyond self, and the likings and interests of the hour, and live in contact with eternal things, which even here, if you guard it and *save* it, 'hath everlasting life,' living in the love of God, Himself the 'lover of souls.' You know how poor an exchange it is, if this soul be lost, while the whole world is sought and gained. While ambition and self-interest may persuade you to be content with the lower, conscience will furnish you with the higher reading of your life; urging you to keep ever on the Godward side, and claiming your struggle and your effort as the simple service you may not deny to the great cause of righteousness and truth in which you are 'fellow-workers together with God.' And whether it be that the struggle is hard for even the willing spirit, or that, unconscious of trial in the level course of work or enjoyment, you are in danger of losing the thought of the high service to which you are called and wearing your loyalty too easily—you will find in prayer the help and the reminder that you need. In it you will meet with the assurance of a grace sufficient for you, of a strength, not yours, which becomes yours as, with pure consecration of your will, you move along the line of ever-growing duty, or

strive to stretch your former strength and power so as to make it equal to new trials and responsibilities. In opening your heart to God, you cannot but rebuke unworthy ambition or unworthy sloth: you set the compass of your conscience right again, and learn to truly judge yourselves as in the presence of the Most High. And happy will you be, if you can pass out of the thought of the weakness or the self-distrust that is the first motive of your prayer, and rising into simple communion with God, can feel that your heart and the issues of your secret life are 'in the Lord's hand, as the rivers of water.'

Chief among the things which can help us to find renewal of our thought and effort in communion with God, is the two-fold communion which we may have with other souls. God speaks to no two men in precisely the same way, leads no two by precisely the same path of discipline. Yet in the past, and in the present, there is a harmony of testimony, beaten out from the diverse notes of many lives and the great facts of God's dealings with man. Voices will reach you from the generations of old, which you will recognise as those of 'holy prophets which have been since the world began.' In many a literature, many a history, you will find words and lives which can strengthen, comfort or inspire you. The verse of the poet, the deed of the hero, or the simple testimony of patient helpful faith, may reach you from many ages and from many lands. But you will probably find, as your forerunners have found, that no word more truly lives anew from age to age, no life more perfectly represents for the men of each generation the consecration of the holy soul, than that of Jesus; and whether you seek for new inspiration and encouragement when faith grows weak, and you tire amid the daily offices of love, of friendship, or of labour for the stranger and the thankless—whether you need comfort for yourself in the times when the sunlight has withdrawn and you seem left alone in the still hour of sorrow—you may gain new energy

for the old task, new light upon your darkened way, in the life and words of him who, of all men, found the infinite issues of the soul's life closest and clearest in the daily duty and the daily care; who found the Father's work in the uplifting of the penitent, and the kingdom of God within the simple truthful soul; who in the service of mercy and truth spared not himself; whose faith and sympathy and patience still have power to bring the sense of God's supporting love to the stricken and forlorn—himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

But you have around you the communion of living men and women, who, united by the recognition of common spiritual needs, form the Church; elders who find peace, workers who find strength, young people who find hope, in common praise and common prayer. Many of you, doubtless, will worship still for many a year in the religious home of your childhood, and your place in it will be more and more endeared to you by ties of friendship, sympathy and co-operation. Some of you may have to seek elsewhere for such religious association as may be consistent with your personal conviction, and may aid you to lead forward your better thoughts and resolutions towards the maturity of manly and womanly piety. You do nothing this day that can restrict you in your search for the religious life and the religious sympathy you may need. You take upon you now no obligations narrower than those of the world-wide Church of God, the great congregation of the faithful who, in every place, seek to live not to themselves but unto Him, and to give practical effect to the two great commandments of love to God and love to man.

And now, my dear friends, may you be enabled by God's help to live according to each devout resolution, each fervent prayer, which rises in your hearts this day; and may God be your strength and shield, your Helper and Deliverer, and your exceeding great reward, in the life that now is, and in that which is to come. Amen.

XIV.

Your Inheritance.

An Address to the Young.

Altrincham.—January, 1894.

I WISH to speak this morning not so much to children as to young people, those especially who go away to school, and, while away from home, join in worship which is different in form from ours, and perhaps hear sermons or other teaching somewhat different from what they have been accustomed to hear in this chapel. If they have understood at all the teaching of this place, if they have entered into the spirit of the worship conducted here, they will be sure that I am not going to say anything to make them think that other forms of worship may not be good and beneficial, that God is not sought and found so fully or so truly, by others or in other ways, as by those who assemble here, or by the helps of devotion and the words of prayer which we are accustomed to use here. Nor will they think that I would have them turn a deaf ear to any religious teaching offered by any sincere and earnest man. We believe that the Spirit of Prayer is one, and has its diverse and manifold ways and forms of expression. We believe that the Spirit of Truth is one, that 'God speaks to hearts of men in many ways.' Men differ in character, thought, education, as well as in their wants and wishes. They differ, therefore, in Religion, which is to each man *his* view of the relation of his life to God and eternal things. They differ in knowledge, in the impression made upon them by what they have read or have been taught. They differ in their *ways* of believing things they can all truly

say they believe. And so, naturally, they differ in what they believe as to religious matters that can be recorded and taught—such histories and teachings, for example, as are found in the Bible. And they differ in their own experience and feelings most of all. But, obviously, it is just here that no one can say to another 'you are wrong if you don't feel as I feel,' or 'you cannot be truthful or sensible unless you see things as I see them.'

Now the very fact that you agree with me thus far (as I suppose you do) is part of an *inherited* position. And I want to speak to you about this *inheritance*, and make you value it. Your sympathy with others, and your readiness to believe that Religion, in form not yours, may be true and sincere, should not make you indifferent to the principles in which, very naturally, your parents have desired to bring you up. And one of these main principles is *Liberality*. We stand for what is called a Liberal faith. We do not want to judge others: we believe that the service of God is manifold, and that there is room in His world, and in His Church, for every good and willing soul. Our ancestors protested against all attempts of governments and churches to make men think alike—or at least say they did; against all efforts to make men speak alike on religious matters by punishing any who spoke differently from what was fixed, by law, as form of prayer or article of doctrine. They protested against all measures for inducing men to give up independence in religion by taking away from them the rights of equal citizenship, and preventing them from gaining positions of honour in the towns in which they lived.* And when they succeeded, in part at least, in gaining their civil rights for themselves, they laboured loyally to extend them to the Roman Catholic and the Jew.† Now, we may say that this struggle is at an end; the laws know no such

* Corporation Act, 1661. Test Act, 1673. Both repealed, 1828.

† Catholic Relief Bills constantly introduced from 1778 to 1829; and Jewish Relief Bills from 1833 to 1858.

distinctions any longer. Still, of course, there are some little persecutions, some little social penalties, to which you may be exposed for being what you are. I know, because I was once the only Dissenter in a large boys' school. If you are ever tried in this manner, remember your liberal inheritance; and extend to others the freedom you claim for yourself. It is illiberal for another to say to you 'you cannot be saved if you are a Unitarian;' but it is not more liberal, is it, for you to say to another 'you must be a fool if you are a Trinitarian'?

Now this principle which we call Liberal is an application to others of what we claim for ourselves, namely, Freedom in Religion. We hold that every man is accountable to God only for the use he makes of his faculties, for the way, correct or mistaken, in which he thinks and reasons about God and his own soul. A man's faith is his private and personal matter. 'Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God,' says Paul. Our common prayer means that common needs and common faith draw us together in worship; but no one in Dunham Road Chapel has a right to say to another 'you cannot come here, because you don't think as I think, or believe as our minister believes'; nor can anyone say to the minister, 'you must not preach this or that, because I think otherwise.' We must do as we would be done by; the freedom we claim, we must give. It is *your inheritance*; you must guard it, keep it, and pass it on unimpaired. Your ancestors won this freedom too, and maintained it. As they had protested against imposition of creeds, articles, and ceremonies by law, so they had to protest against all interference with the freedom of personal faith on the part of churches and church-officers. When certain of those who dissented from the Church of England obtained liberty to worship as they liked,* a great number of them were inclined to say, 'Now we can make churches just after our own fashion; we will have no

* Toleration Act, 1689.

members who don't agree with us; we will examine them on their religious views before we admit them. We will have our ministers promise beforehand exactly what doctrines they will preach; and we will tie up our chapels by Trust Deeds so that nobody shall ever preach or worship here, after we are dead, who shall not think then as we think now.' This is the principle of close communion and close Trusts. Ours is the principle of open communion and open Trusts. Your ancestors believed that the dead hand of a past generation should not be laid upon the living thought and faith of the present. They had faith enough to trust the faith of their descendants. But, you may say, our parents are Unitarians; were the people who founded these open Trusts and chapels, Unitarians? No, they were not, at least at the outset; not in a single case as far as I know. The people who built this Chapel were; those who built Shaw Lane Chapel in 1814, probably were; those who built Hale Chapel were not. The same *principle* runs through the generations of men who did not hold the same religious *opinions*. See that you stick to the principle through all changes of opinion, and that you leave every institution you inherit as free and open as you find it.

But you may say, 'We never hear any adverse remarks about these liberal principles; but we do know that we are held to be very singular by reason of our Unitarian belief. Is not this the thing we have to stand up for?'

Stand up, I reply, for anything and everything you sincerely believe; for Unitarian belief, if you hold it; for the Truth, as God grants you to see it, in faithfulness of mind and purity of heart. But be sure that it is your personal belief, and not a thing that you think you have because you come to this Chapel,—not a thing you are supposed to stand for because you have joined a theological party. Those who hold Unitarian beliefs may well come to a free church such as this, because in this place they are subject to no inquiry as to their belief, and to no reproof,

exclusion, or expulsion on the ground of it; nor do they hear creeds which condemn them for holding it. Those who were free to think for themselves on religious matters, during a period stretching from the middle of the last century to the middle of this, developed, in countless instances, and in many manners and degrees, a Unitarian form of Christian belief. They felt that they had a duty of testimony with regard to this belief, and they formed associations for making it known.* And you, instructed in this belief, and embracing it perhaps with more earnestness as you find out more and more what it means, will doubtless feel the same duty of testimony concerning it. But remember, you may not limit the church you inherit by your belief of to-day without disloyalty to the ancestors who refused to limit you by the belief of their day. Any word, title, or placard stating that this is a *Unitarian Church*, or giving to outsiders the impression that this is a Church for Unitarians only, that only such would be welcomed to communion or to membership, would be such a limitation and such a disloyalty.

But our inheritance of Unitarian belief? I will say a few words about maintaining that. The word Unitarian sprang out of ancient controversy†—controversy within the Christian Church concerning the inner nature of God. It is not to be understood as another word for Monotheism, or belief in one God, as opposed to belief in many Gods. Christians have always been agreed in believing in One God. But most Christians maintain that within the being of that One God there is a distinction of persons, so that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are, together, that One God. The Unitarian says, 'I believe in One God, the Father Almighty,' and when he comes to 'and in Jesus

* Such is the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, a society of individuals—not a Union of Churches, or a body representing Churches by delegation.

† But the word itself is not ancient—not three hundred years old.

Christ His only Son, our Lord,' he has passed outside the idea of the Godhead, as he conceives it. The Trinitarian, who holds 'three persons and one God,' says 'Jesus Christ is the Son, and also God; and the Holy Spirit' (which to the Unitarian is the Biblical name for God Himself in contact with the human soul) 'is also God, and a distinct *person* in the Godhead.' The Unitarian, then, believes in One God, without the distinction of persons. He would generally add, that Christ is not God in any sense in which he can use the word God, and that the Holy Spirit is not to be understood as in any way separate from God Himself so as to have a distinct personality, or to be thought of as a person at all. But remember, that our Unitarians in England, nearly all belonging of late years to free churches like this one of ours, and entering into their inheritance of Liberalty, have never had an authorised creed or confession of faith, and have never (so far as I know) imposed Unitarian terms of membership or communion; and have used the freedom they inherited to think for themselves. Consequently, when they get beyond the initial step of avowing the Divine Unity, and refusing to admit the Divine Trinity, they cease to be at one; and the Unitarianism I preach is as different from that in which my father was instructed as if he and I belonged to separate churches. But the fact that, as I have said, Unitarians have belonged to our Liberal Churches has kept them together in spite of such differences. Don't, however, suppose, as some people do, that Unitarianism is the only Liberal Christianity. A man may hold Unitarian doctrine as illiberally as any other.

But the modern Unitarian has applied his view of the Oneness of God to several questions which lie beyond the particular point of controversy which gave him his name; and he maintains that his Unitarianism, thus applied, can furnish him with the elements of a liberal and consistent Christian faith. I will mention one or two of these applications.

The Oneness of God should make us think of one Will, one purpose of good, one spiritual activity, running through this mighty universe. Science is telling us that, in the infinite distances of space, in the immense systems of suns and spheres, there is a oneness of Law—that all forces are, probably, one in nature and in source. People of old used to think that God's action was confined to here and there, or to now and then; that nature was a vast machine that went of itself, save when Deity sometimes interfered with it. Religious people thought God left the world of man to itself, save that He gave a few people a *dispensation*, as it was called, occasionally, or sometimes more especially visited the earth with direful judgments, or manifestations of His presence in miracle or marvel. In trying to think of God in His relation to man, they have thought of Him as sometimes loving, and sometimes wrathful, sometimes all judgment, and sometimes all mercy; and represented the Love of God as pleading with His righteous Vengeance on behalf of the guilty or the condemned. Try to think of Him as one in His essence and character; to realise that as there is one law in the world of nature, binding the little things of earth into unity with the worlds that eye cannot see, so in all the world of things spiritual and moral there is one mighty law and purpose of Truth and Righteousness and Love. Think that the same call of duty and truthfulness that brought Abraham out of the house of his father, the same call to courage and devotion that came to Moses in the desert, the same faith that sang in the Psalmist's heart when he lifted up his eyes to the glories of the firmament, the same love that moved Jesus to seek and save the lost and lay down his life for the testimony of righteousness and love—that all these are for you, and speak and appeal to you, as voices of the same Spirit, words of the same God, the one Almighty Father who is the same from generation to generation, there always, to be your rock and your fortress, your very present help in time of trouble. Remember Him

in the days of your youth, and fear will never cast out love. The simplicity of your faith, if it will not explain all the problems of the world and of life,—and I do not promise you that it will, or that any theory which the human mind is capable of forming will do that—will at least save you from the lot of those to whom the thought of God is merely the presentation of an intricate problem of His inner nature, and of the ways of revelation and salvation He may have devised; who put it away as a thing too hard for them, to be taken up when they have time; and the time never comes, and faith is killed by the difficulties of belief.

The Unitarian's faith in the Oneness of God implies a belief in the oneness of Christ. I must explain what I mean by this. You may be told by those who are not Unitarians that *Christ is God*. The Unitarian denies this; he says that Jesus, who lived and died on earth, was not then, and is not now, *the God* of whom I was speaking in the last paragraph. But you must remember that when people first began to think that Christ was God, they did not mean it in this sense; nor does any orthodox person now, I think, who really understands his creed. The people of old, who first put forth the doctrine, meant that Christ was a divine person in such a sense that his word, his life, his spirit, his teaching, were of and from God so directly and immediately, that it might be said that, in him, God lived and spoke as man. You see already, in the New Testament, efforts to explain this nearness of Christ to God, in various ways:—representing now, that God gave of His Spirit to him without measure; now, that he was actually and physically 'born of the Spirit'; again, that in him the Divine Word (that is, all the light that flows from God, the eternal Mind, into the minds of men) 'became flesh,' and dwelt among men in human form. But when all this was superseded by saying that he himself was not only divine, but (in a sense) actually *God*, it could not be forgotten that he was certainly *man*. The New

Testament was quite clear on that point,—much clearer than on the other: how could he be *both at once*? To answer this question has been the great difficulty of all subsequent Theology—to answer it, I mean, so as to get a result at all corresponding to the Person you read about in the Gospels. Theories have been invented—that there were in Jesus two wills, two minds, two natures, a double consciousness; that, while in fact always both God and man, he spoke and acted sometimes in one capacity, sometimes in the other. When he said he did not know a thing, he meant that as *man* he did not know it, while as *God* he knew everything. In his weariness, in his pain, we are to remember that, as Sidney Smith says in one of his sermons, he is 'acting a human part!'* Well may the Bishop of Manchester remind his hearers† that the fact that Jesus was a *real man* has been lost sight of in the desire to prove that he was more. Now, it appears to me that only the Oneness of Christ can make him *real*; the belief that he was one person—with one character, one mind, and one conscience—is the necessary thing to make him real to us. If he were not so, we could never enter into his feeling or his thought, his faith or his love; and if we cannot do that, we can have no real sympathy, and we cannot learn those things which sympathy alone can teach. If he were not so, he could be no true example to us. If he were not the tried, suffering, and dying man that the people around him believed him to be, how is his triumph over pain, his submission to death, any kind of motive, guide, help, to us? Think this out for yourselves; and you will see that while the life of another, higher, purer, more devoted than yourself, may be said to be a mystery to you, yet you know the meaning of it; you know that you have in yourself the beginnings of the power which he has gained. The self-denial of the hero, the patience of

* Sermon: 'The Lawyer that tempted Christ.' 1824.

† See his volume, 'The Teachings of Christ,' 1891.

the prison-visitor, the hopefulness of the men and women who seek and save the lost—these things appeal to you because you *can* faintly understand the feeling which has led them forward through the training and discipline of character into joyous and complete self-sacrifice. But if one tells you that they were made, to begin with, with a nature other than yours—that a power you can never hope to gain sustains them; a knowledge more than human lights up for them the dimness of their lot;—this is a mystery that cuts off human interest, and closes the door on moral and spiritual influence.

Without professing, then, to frame any new creed about God or Christ to take the place of that which I reject; without propounding any new theory as to the inner nature of either, I have spoken of the 'Unitarianism' I hold as a personal faith, not as a church-doctrine, or as a condition of the exercise of my ministry in this place. I have taught you that God is not manifold; that Christ is not divided; acknowledging one Lord, and one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. To Him be glory evermore. Amen.

XV.

Uniformity and Nonconformity.

The substance of an Address given in Manchester College Chapel on Sunday, May 19, 1912.

Isaiah li. 1 :—'Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn.'

TO-DAY is the 19th of May, and on this day 250 years ago the Act of Uniformity received the Royal Assent, and with the ejection of the 2,000 ministers consequent upon this, begins the line of religious ancestry represented by this College. We look back to

> '. . . those Unconforming, whom one rigorous day
> Drives from their cures, a voluntary prey
> To poverty, and grief, and disrespect,
> And some to want, . . .
> Their altars they forego, their homes they quit,
> Fields which they love, and paths they daily trod,
> And cast the future upon Providence,
> As men the dictate of whose inward sense
> Outweighs the world.'*

I am appointed to address you on the historical and religious significance of this event, and on its place in the national life of England.

All the troubles of Protestantism, where once established, are traceable to the notion that the civil ruler takes on, as by right of succession, the Papal dominion over the Church. This is exemplified in the great compromise arrived at in

* Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Sonnets iii. 6.

the German Diet, and expressed in the words '*Cujus regio, ejus religio*: whose is the territory, his is its religion.' The German prince devises or sanctions oppressive Church regulations for his territory, however small. The Swiss municipality assumes to dictate to the ministers who shall and who shall not be admitted to Communion; and this produces the tremendous turning of the tables which we know as the Rule of Calvin in Geneva. The English monarch admits or stints measures of reformation at will, on the Tudor principle that 'whatsoever His Majesty should enjoin in matters of religion should be obeyed by all his subjects.' Henry VIII., as Supreme Head of the Church, applied this principle as he chose, and men suffered simultaneously for the denial of his supremacy and the denial of transubstantiation. After the interval of Roman reaction and the Marian persecutions, the Church of England approached its definite settlement. The supremacy of the Crown was again defined; to it was reserved all power of alteration, revision, and addition, alike in matters ritual and doctrinal. Queen Elizabeth was in a hurry to enforce uniformity; she believed that external conformity would lead to unanimity. She devolved the power reserved to the Crown upon a Court of High Commission, and spurred the Bishops to action with injunctions and admonitions. The returned exiles (and among them were many of the Elizabethan Bishops) who had lived during the Marian period in communion with the reformed Churches of the Continent, found themselves forbidden to take any steps to win England to a definite Protestantism, which seemed to them the one thing needful. The Queen would have no preaching, because this might lead to discussion and difference; she could not, however, prevent the growth of a party of further reformation. Within this party two sections developed: one moderate, conformable, and wishful to maintain the national and parochial character of the Church; the other more attached to the model presented

by the reformed Churches of the Continent, which they believed to be closer to the New Testament pattern, and espousing a Presbyterian theory of Church organisation. Both demanded the institution of Discipline which the Edwardian reformers had declared to be most necessary. (See the Commination Service, where we read: 'Brethren, in the Primitive Church there was a godly discipline . . . until the said discipline be restored again, which is much to be wished, etc.')

Outside these parties we have on one side the colourless Conformists—those who had been Protestants under Edward and Catholics under Mary, and were now disposed to be anything that the Queen liked to make them or call them; and on the other the Separatists, who held that the particular Church, gathered, planted, and covenanted, is that to which all the promises of the New Testament are applied and in which all the power of Christ may be exemplified. The charter of the Moderates was the exception made for their case in the Act of Subscription to Articles, 1571, an Act passed by Parliament in spite of the Queen's disapproval; she was perpetually insisting that such legislation infringed her own supremacy. By this Act, which authorised the Thirty-nine Articles, the minister was required to subscribe to all the articles of religion '*which only concern* the confession of the true Christian Faith and the doctrine of the Sacraments,' the Articles which embody a theory of the Church and its ministry being thus allowed to be non-essential. This continued to be the charter of those who held views as to the parity of ministers, who thought it desirable that Bishops should not be officers of State, and who demanded more freedom and initiative for the parochial clergy.

On the accession of James I., 1603, the hopes which had been built upon his Presbyterian education and antecedents were rudely disappointed. Representatives of the party of further reformation still adhering to the Church were

invited to meet a number of the bishops at the Hampton Court Conference over which the King presided. Only one of their suggestions was accepted, viz., the proposal for a new translation of the Bible, which produced in 1611 our 'Authorized' Version. From this Conference, James brought away the motto 'No Bishop, no King,' and proceeded to put forth the canons of 1604, which had no Parliamentary sanction, and by which every minister is ordered to declare that he acknowledges all and every Article to be agreeable to the Word of God, and that he willingly and *ex animo* accepts the new form of subscription and all things contained therein. Between seven and eight hundred ministers declined this subscription, many of whom were suspended or deprived and some ultimately imprisoned; and from this time the question of subscription to articles, leading directly to the discussion of fundamentals in Christian doctrine and Church polity, becomes prominent in this country. In the later years of James, under the primacy of Abbot, himself very much of a Puritan, we find a number of ministers, episcopally ordained, who would not qualify for benefices by the new terms of subscription, who were maintained as preachers or lecturers, often by the corporations of towns (as in the case of Baxter), and sometimes by funds privately raised, especially in cases where the rector or vicar did not preach. These lecturers incurred the particular enmity of Archbishop Laud. I cannot dwell upon his assiduous efforts to enforce a uniformity after his own mind and that of Charles I.; but there is a kind of judicial blindness which is almost pathetic about his production of the Canons of 1640, just on the eve of the breakdown of Church and Royalty alike; it is like the sinking ship firing a broadside as she goes down. From the issue of these Canons, Richard Baxter dated his nonconformity.

When the Long Parliament met in the same year, the extreme Presbyterian party was nowhere. The whole

sense of the House was with the Moderates, and it looked as if a reformed episcopacy after the model of Archbishop Ussher or that of Bishop Williams would have satisfied everybody. But the war in its early stages went against the Parliament, and political exigencies compelled alliance with Scotland; foremost among the conditions imposed by the Scots were the taking of the Solemn League and Covenant by the members of the English House of Commons, and their undertaking to promote a Presbyterian Church-polity in England, and so to ensure a uniform religious organization on both sides of the Tweed. With these conditions Parliament complied, obliging all its members to sign the Covenant, and by an ordinance of February 2nd, 1644, enforcing the same subscription upon all men above eighteen years of age. Apparently, however, nobody was very much in earnest about Parliamentary Presbyterianism; Lancashire was the first county to adopt it. The City of London, largely influenced by the Scottish delegates who attended the Westminster Assembly, did more than adopt it; it developed a high doctrine of the divine right of presbytery, but Presbyterian organisation seems hardly to have been effective elsewhere. The Parliamentary army, besides developing a number of religious eccentricities, fostered a serious objection to what it supposed to be a new clerical domination. The Little, or Barebones, Parliament of 1653 was entertaining projects for disendowing both the Church and the Universities for the purpose of relieving the burden of taxation consequent upon the war, when Cromwell summarily closed its proceedings. Becoming at once Lord Protector, he constituted what may be called the Established Church of the Protectorate. Many people fail to understand who were the clergy ejected in 1662, and identify them in their minds with Ranters and Fifth Monarchy men and other unlicensed preachers of the Commonwealth days. But the Church of the Protectorate to which the ejected belonged, was in form the Church of

England, retaining its parochial system and the support of the clergy by tithes, and respecting the rights of patrons; for instance, Richard Frankland, founder of the Northern Academy of which this College is the descendant, held the living of Auckland St. Andrew on the presentation of Sir Arthur Hazelrigge. But in every case the presented person had to go before the Triers for approval. Of course, there were complaints that they were prejudiced and capricious, but Baxter defends them. The Moderates were now the exponents of the situation; Baxter's scheme of voluntary association extended from Worcestershire into counties where Parliamentary Presbyterianism had made no progress. The several ministers might organise their parishes as they would. Some did so on the Congregational model. Baxter and others preferred the old way with churchwardens and sidesmen. So we have a system, national and parochial, worked by men divergent in theory, but united by voluntary association in common work and interest.

The breadth of Cromwell's own view had been expressed in the Instrument of Government (1653), 'that such as professed faith in God by Jesus Christ (though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth) shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of the faith and exercise of their religion, provided this liberty be not extended to Popery or prelacy, nor to such as, under the profession of Christ, set forth and practise licentiousness.' Hereupon, Baxter tells us, the orthodox party said that the words 'faith in God by Jesus Christ' should mean nothing less than the fundamentals of religion; and he was appointed a member of a committee of divines to draw up a statement of fundamentals, 'to be as a test in this toleration.' Then follow his often quoted words: 'I would have had the brethren to have offered the Parliament the Creed (*i.e.* the Apostles' Creed), the Lord's Prayer, and Decalogue alone as our essentials or fundamentals, which, at least, contain all that

is necessary to salvation, and hath been taken by all the Churches for the sum of their religion. And whereas they still said, "A Socinian or a Papist will subscribe all this," I answered them, So much the better and so much fitter it is to be the matter of our concord.' What does this mean? Not that he was indifferent to further points of doctrine, not that he cared nothing for theological refinements—he spent his life among them—but that, as he explains, it is always better to take a man into, than to leave him out of, your religious polity. Begin by making him an outlaw, and you lose all influence over him. Make the essentials such as he can readily admit, or his acceptance of what you impose becomes a mere form which he will probably treat disingenuously. Make them uniform for all, so that there may be no distinction at the outset between him and the man who subscribes more than he.

Baxter had faith in the practical union of moderate men. He tells us exactly this in speaking of the associated ministers of Worcestershire. After excepting a few Episcopals and Independents who held aloof, he says: 'All the rest were mere Catholics, men of no faction, nor siding with any party, but owning that which was good in all as far as they could discern it, and upon a concord in so much, laying out themselves for the great ends of their ministry, the people's edification.' I doubt not that a great number of the ejected ministers were such 'disengaged faithful men,' as he calls them. I think our religious ancestry runs back to those men whom Baxter afterwards defended as the 'mere Nonconformists'—'those who had addicted themselves to no sect or party at all, though the vulgar called them by the name of Presbyterians.' 'I am loth,' he adds, 'to call them a party, because they were for Catholicism (we should say, Catholicity) against parties.' How strong in numbers the Moderates were, may be gathered from Baxter's estimate that if the Restoration settlement of the Church had been

on the lines of Charles II.'s October Declaration passed into law, not more than three hundred ministers would have refused to conform. As it was, the restored Bishops and a vindictive House of Commons were bent on making such comprehension impossible, and won a mean triumph in the Act of Uniformity.

Before Charles II. returned to England, in his Declaration from Breda, and afterwards, in the October Declaration of 1660 to which I have alluded, he showed an exact knowledge of the wishes and demands of the Puritan clergy, and a generous spirit of concession to them. He proposed to take subscription back to the terms of the Elizabethan Act already quoted (*i.e.* subscription to the articles which only concern the confession of the true Christian Faith, and the doctrine of the Sacraments); to make Bishops *primi inter pares* by associating presbyters with them in local synods, and even in ordination. Option was to be allowed in matters of ceremony, University subscription to be abolished, the Prayer Book to be revised, and liberty granted to those who could not conform even on these terms. This might have been the charter of a comprehensive National Church for that age and for many generations. The Act of Uniformity, which was passed in 1662, was practically equivalent to the Elizabethan Acts of Uniformity and Subscription, with no loopholes and no exemptions. The Act was to come into operation naturally within six months of the Royal Assent of the 19th of May; but by an arbitrary act of cruelty it was to be enforced on August 24 (St. Bartholomew's Day), so that those who did not conform should not receive the Michaelmas tithe. The Prayer Book which the Act authorised did not issue from the press until a few days before August 24, and did not find its way into the hands of many of the clergy by that date.

The story of persecution under the successive acts of the Clarendon Code I cannot now relate. With a break, due to Charles' abortive Indulgence in 1672, the harrying and

imprisonment of Nonconformist ministers continued almost to the eve of the Revolution of 1688. Their offence constantly was ministering in private houses to friends and members of their former congregations. The Toleration Act of 1689 allowed the meeting of 'Their Majesties' Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England,' under conditions, in licensed premises; the Comprehension Bill, which embodied the hope still strong in the mind of the moderate Nonconformist of being restored to a place within a National Church, did not pass. In fact, it is strange to note how little that one might reasonably have expected came to pass in fulfilment of the hopes of the moderate Nonconformist. He had liberty of worship; he and his fellows need meet no longer in holes and corners guarded with devices for preventing the constable or the spy from being able to identify the preacher. But the elders among them had misgivings as to the institution of separate worship, and were careful that their meetings should not take place in the 'public time,' that is while service was proceeding at the parish church. Constantly the retired position of the old meeting-house is a reminder of the desire of its founders to avoid every appearance of aggressiveness. The minister did not look beyond his own little society, and disclaimed all notion of religious competition with the Established Church. There was a temper of mind generated by the long period of enforced patience and disappointed hope; a calm piety that knew little of the exaltations and depressions of the fervid soul; a deep sense of moral duty, and a punctual discharge of the offices of religion in the meeting-house, the family, and the private hour.

Liberty of education was long delayed. The Conventicle Acts had forbidden an ejected minister or any member of his family to teach anybody anything. The Universities were closed against Dissenters; Richard Frankland and his students were obliged to hide in places in the Lake

District that are even now difficult to identify. But when at last the Dissenting academies escaped the threats of suppression which menaced them in the reign of Queen Anne, they were willing to extend to others the liberty they claimed for themselves. This at least was the tradition of that Nonconformity with which we are allied. You will, perhaps, be interested in a quotation from the address of Dr. Barnes, the first Principal of this College, in which, in the year 1786, he dedicated it 'to Truth, to Liberty, to Religion.' After pointing out that prejudice, especially in the form of quiet depreciation of those who differ from you, is no more justifiable in one religious party than in another, he thus addresses the liberal Nonconformist of his day: 'You are a Dissenter; perhaps a Hebrew of the Hebrews, you can trace back your lineage to the first confessors of Nonconformity; and you wish your son not to swerve from a profession which his ancestors have held so long and so firmly. Do not endeavour to accomplish this by infusing into his mind the false notion that all worth is confined to the communion with which his birth has connected him, or that its opinions have some higher authority than the judgment of those who profess them. Take no unfair advantage of his respectful feeling towards you, to make him think it a breach of filial duty to differ hereafter in his judgment from you and them. Let him know the truth, and the whole truth, on every subject connected with religion, without anxiety or reserve. But teach him also to love and reverence the truth for its own sake, and to spurn all compromise or concealment of his sincere and well-considered convictions. Let him feel in himself the value of a free mind; accustom him to a high standard of moral action, cherish in him a sense of independence, give him a right estimate of the worth of those worldly honours which tempt men to a dishonest or thoughtless profession of conformity with an endowed and established faith. Do this, and you will neither have over-

stepped your duty nor have fallen short of it; you will probably leave a zealous successor in the place which you have occupied in the House of God; but, at all events, you will have given to society an intelligent and honest man.'

The third thing demanded by the Dissenter was liberty of public usefulness. He was still barred by the Test and Corporation Acts from holding any commission under the Crown, any office of public trust, even from being a town councillor of his native place. Such functions were open only to those who had taken the communion according to the rite of the Church of England. And these Acts were not repealed until 1828; but who could charge the 'Dissenting interest' with indifference to the public good, and slackness in the causes of justice and mercy?

I must notice in conclusion two characteristics of our religious inheritance which grew out of the experience of the Old Dissent, almost as soon as it became a recognised body and had to arrange, however unwillingly, for its own continuance. The *Comprehensive Church*, which England refused to make actual, became an ideal. When the first Dissenting ordination in London was to be held (1694), the candidates, among whom was Edmund Calamy, who tells the story, insisted on being ordained 'ministers of the Catholic Church of Christ, without any confinement to particular flocks or any one denomination.' (Notice the persistence of the Baxterian term.) The very language lifts the thought from a mere question between Presbyterian and Congregational. The minister is to be V.D.M.—the professional description he appended to his name: *Verbi Divini Minister*, servant of the Word of God, not servant of Salem Chapel! And for us even now the Church in which we take service is not so much actual, as *becoming*.

And finally, was it not inevitable that the limitations in practice of broad and inspiring ideas should become intolerable? Questions of the subscription demanded by

law, of doctrinal tests at the ordination or settlement of ministers, successively arose, provoked controversy, and again and again divided the Dissenting ranks. With the minority abode the principle of a broad Church fellowship, of freedom of thought for the student, and freedom of expression for the preacher, which is our inheritance to-day.

XVI.

History and Aspiration.

A Sermon preached at the Annual Meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in Essex Church, Notting Hill Gate, London, June 1st, 1887.

Jeremiah xxxi. 32-34:—'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers. . . . This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord.'

I. Corinthians ii. 16:—'Who hath known the mind of the Lord? . . . But we have the mind of Christ.'

THIS Jubilee occasion naturally induces a mood of retrospect; but I would say, in asking you to accompany me first in a glance at what I conceive to be certain well-marked periods in the life of our churches, that I do not address you as an ecclesiastical body, or as accredited representatives of churches, but as those who, gathered for the most part from religious societies in which, through an inherited freedom from doctrinal tests and trust-deeds, a Unitarian ministry has long been possible and actual, may be assumed to believe that a *rational theology* is still attainable, and to be thus associated because you believe that Unitarian Christianity, in its varied forms, has still a word to say amid the faith and unfaith of our day. It is not my aim to trace developments of doctrine (for I intend my discourse to be by no means theological); I mean only to call your attention to certain phases of our church life—changes of conception as to what we, and our

fathers before us, have sought to attain and sought to effect—changes, too, of feeling with regard to the significance of our Dissent—the need and the work present to the consciousness of those who have sought in our churches freedom of thought and speech and worship—and the idea of the place and mission of these churches in the world of Christendom and the service of God and man.

Looking, then, 'unto the rock whence we are hewn,' I would remind you that the Presbyterians who applied for their licences and built their meeting-houses under the provisions of the Toleration Act of 1689, were quite free from any imputation of Anti-Trinitarian heresy. For any who were not thus clear, the Act provided no exemption from the penalties of the Five-Mile Act and the two Conventicle Acts. This limitation our ancestors accepted with more than willingness. They even prayed the King (1697) to interdict the printing of Socinian works. The Presbyterian was not an Anti-Trinitarian, and the Anti-Trinitarian was not a Dissenter: *his* home was in the Church of England. Bull's 'Defence of the Nicene Faith' was directed against foreign scholars, not English Nonconformists. Arthur Bury, who may be looked upon as actually initiating the Trinitarian controversy in this country, was head of an Oxford college. Thomas Firmin, who had most to do with the 'Unitarian Tracts,' was a Churchman and a friend of Archbishop Tillotson, and most of the writers of those tracts are careful to explain that their sympathies are with the Established Church. When the Presbyterians joined 'their brethren of the Congregational way' in 1691 (the year of the first series of 'Unitarian Tracts'), and both parties agreed to be 'United Brethren,' and to the world at large to be alike 'Protestant Dissenters,' there was no suspicion of unsoundness on the Presbyterian side as to the central point of theology. Differences appeared—differences of liking and working, which no 'heads of agreement' could have contemplated: but these were, first, as to the

real good of what we should now call Revivalism; secondly as to the relations of grace and morality, called in question by just such Antinomianism as recurs in modern revivals; thirdly, as to subscription to human creeds and articles. This last difference, which arose after the Union had practically become a dead letter in the Metropolis, was due to the reference to the ministers in London of the difficulties which had arisen among the United Brethren of Devon and Exeter, in connection with the reputed outbreak of Arianism in Mr. Hallett's Academy in Exeter, where, it was alleged, students for the Nonconformist ministry had read 'The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity,' by Dr. Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James's, Westminster.

What, then, in these early days of Protestant Dissent, did our religious ancestry consciously stand for? Mainly for three things: liberty of worship, liberty of education, liberty of public usefulness.

At the first settlement of the Church as reformed under Queen Elizabeth, the Puritan had objected not so much to the provisions of the Act of Uniformity as passed by Parliament, as to the large reserve to the Crown of discretion in enforcing doctrine and observance—a discretion exercised by the spasmodic activity of the High Commission Court, and by private injunction to the Bishops, followed by local enforcements of various kinds in their several dioceses. It was in resistance to the constant regal and episcopal intermeddling that the Nonconformity was born which came to the front in the Great Rebellion: it was that Nonconformity which the Parliament of this country, under Charles II., by its vindictive enactments, took upon itself the responsibility of saying should be for ever *outside the Church of England*. When, at the Revolution, the nation seemed to have discarded for ever the Stuart doctrine of the divine right of kings, and with it that Tudor doctrine which the Stuarts had warmly espoused, 'that whatsoever his Majesty should enjoin in matters of religion should

be obeyed by all his subjects,' toleration, *liberty of worship* was all that was obtained; but not all that was promised, and not all that was hoped. It was a great thing for those who had gathered at nightfall in holes and corners—who had worshipped on Sundays in some lonely farmstead five miles from any corporate town—to meet openly in the eye of day, not caring who heard their psalmody or saw the minister's face, none being permitted to rise up and make them afraid; it rested with Parliament and the common sense of the country to undo the flagrant injustice of the Act of 1662 (*and that is where it rests still*). They trusted to no kingly indulgence, but to the steady process of constitutional change. They believed that comprehension *would come*. They built meeting-houses, whose open trusts bear witness not only to their distrust of artificial and temporary settlements of truth—not merely to their faith that 'the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His holy Word'—but to their belief that their enforced exile from the National Church would not be for ever.

Liberty of education was not so readily conceded as liberty of worship. Parliament had endeavoured to extirpate that learning which was the boast of the Presbyterian and the pride of his ministry. It had forbidden *teaching* on the part of any ejected minister or any member of his family. Excluded from the Universities, refused in their petition for one of the smaller halls of Oxford or Cambridge, the Presbyterians persisted in their effort to provide University learning without test or subscription; ministers were arrested in their chapels for having students in their houses; and only the death of Queen Anne saved the Academies from total suppression. Their history will reveal an almost neglected page in the calendar of English educational progress.

As to *liberty of public usefulness*, so dear to those who trusted that, under a monarchy based upon the Declaration of Rights, all subjects might claim a share in the privileges

and duties of equal citizenship, I need scarcely say how their hopes were foiled by the very statesmen who depended upon their support. The fact that the Test and Corporation Acts were not repealed till 1828 is significant enough. But that a public and a patriotic spirit characterised those whom the State affected to regard as political pariahs, is admitted on all hands.

But this position of standing up for rights—making the most of timid concessions—seems to have entered into the heart of the churches. There was a constrained patience, a longing for that which they could do little to effect; the very chapels were a mute appeal to the public to consider that they did not represent *aggression*, a mild rebuke to the turbulence that cried, '*The Church is in danger*.' They were isolated; for the Subscription controversy broke up nearly every attempt at revived Presbyterian association. A younger generation found that there was little to separate them from the moderate Churchmanship of Tillotson and Sykes and Hoadley; and the fathers mourned over *the decline of the Dissenting interest*, while young men like Butler and Secker and Hort left the Dissenting Academies to become Bishops and Archbishops in the Established Church.

And in the latter half of the last century the great Evangelical movement left two bodies only untouched—the moderate Churchman on one side, and the Presbyterian on the other; allied in their view as to the conditions (though not as to the conclusions) of theological inquiry, as to the ultimate appeal, as to rational method; and, further, as to the necessity of *moral* preaching, and the duty of resisting extreme doctrines of election and grace, and rescuing religion, if possible, from becoming a mere playground of ecstasy and terror.

In the next period, Theophilus Lindsey has left the Church of England and established, in 1774, the first Unitarian chapel, summoning, by his appeal to come out on a definite

theological issue, those who had perhaps been a little alarmed at the controversial outspokenness of Dr. Priestley. It is strange, in retrospect, that it was not till 1813 that meeting for *Unitarian* worship was legalised by the amendment of the Toleration Act. But just that period was signalised by a missionary zeal and a single-hearted enthusiasm on behalf of Unitarianism as 'the doctrine of the gospel.' It is interesting to read the records of the time: here, half-deserted Presbyterian chapels are filled with crowded audiences to listen to a missionary of the Unitarian Fund; here, a Wesleyan or a Baptist congregation declares that it discovers itself to be Unitarian; here, new and flourishing causes start up where we should least expect them, and where, alas! we should now look for them in vain. The movement was a controversy—to be illuminated here and there by conspicuous ability, by contributions to literature of permanent interest—to be inspired by the moral fervour of Channing—to be lowered sometimes into a hard textualism, and a tendency to speak as if there could be no difficulties in religion except to the uncandid or the mentally deficient, as if some kind of common sense could abolish mystery and read the whole story of God and the soul. If I speak of this as of a past phase, there are other memories which I would not so lightly pass by. This Unitarianism had its distinctly characteristic piety; it did not say much about it, and laughingly accepted the exposition of its creed as 'to believe in one God and pay twenty shillings in the pound.' It was not introspective, and it knew little of the heats and chills of emotion and despondency. It trusted in God with a calm sincerity of soul; it looked up to the Divine justice without terror and without evasion; it could not be afraid of God. Of how many do we instinctively think, whose unobtrusive devotion might have found fit expression in these words of Doddridge from a hymn which always seems to place me right in the line of my religious ancestry:—

'Full in Thy view through life I pass,
And in Thy view I die;
And when this mortal bond is broke,
My God will still be nigh.'

But there was a sense in which the controversial Unitarianism of which I have been speaking was pre-eminently an historical religion. Its justification was all in the past; it rested on the documents of the Christian revelation; it spoke of Jesus Christ as 'the Christian Lawgiver;' it proved the Divine authentication of his mission by recorded miracle; it declared itself prepared to be judged by his words; it referred to ecclesiastical history to show the genesis of opposing error, and read its story as a development of the '*corruptions of Christianity*.' The considerations that have changed this view may be described as partly critical and partly philosophical. They proceeded first from the study of Biblical literature; from the historical investigation of the structure of the Gospels; from revived attention to the life of Christ in relation to his age and to antecedent Judaism; from the seeking of Christianity rather in the spirit of the life he lived and inspired, than in the letter of his commands or the views concerning him which might be deduced from the New Testament literature; and, on the other hand, from an appreciation of the constants of religion amid varied and changing forms of religious thought, and a finding in the communion of God and the soul, now and here, the criterion of personal religion, combined with an historical perception of far-reaching bonds of sympathy in the ultimate experiences of the devout of every age. If you identify that movement with a decline of denominational interests, an erasure of theological lines, and a removal of landmarks, you cannot, I think, deny that it has been identified with a revival in our midst of spiritual Christianity, which will be connected in the next age with the names of John James Tayler, and others whom you will at once place by his side

in your reverent esteem. I admit that in its operation it has led, first to religious *individualism*, and next, to what I may venture to call religious *socialism*: and that the feeling for religious *denominationalism* has thereby been materially weakened. I must avoid temptations to personal reminiscence; I would only ask you to consider the changes of the last fifty years. Recognizing more fully than ever the position of our ancestors as to non-subscription and carrying it to the extent of a total abolition of doctrinal pledges, expressed or understood—with a growing sense that the assumption even of our doctrinal name does not guarantee any certainty of religious union or intellectual agreement among those who bear it—with a trust that the affinities of faith must be allowed to adjust themselves—with a universal discarding of official religiousness, and with so much respect for the faith of honest doubt that we have often been too reticent of the faith of honest conviction—we have set ourselves to meet an actual need of our time, and sought to extend to others our privileges of worship and of freedom: we have founded churches for the churchless—we have been joined by many who, themselves repelled from all forms of religion with which they were acquainted, have not wished their children to begin just where they have left off; and by many, too, who, conscious of no harsh rupture with old association, bring to us the riches of a practical piety nurtured and trained amid experiences widely different from our own. But it is not true (it is at least very far from being *all* the truth) that our churches have become temporary resting-places for theological waifs or anti-theological strays. I believe we have been faithful in this matter: we have striven 'to serve the present age,' and 'our calling to fulfil'; but we ought at least to know our own minds as to what we may fairly desire and hope as to the issue of our church life from this period of change and fusion. Of course it is the tendency of all religious association to lose in intensity

as it gains in breadth; but there is danger lest we lose the 'unity of the spirit' amid varieties of operations, and become unmindful of common objects and common sentiments which might unite or strengthen union. Is it not a fact that in many of our congregations there is a want of that bond of mutual feeling and understanding which, in the case of free church membership and free church government, only a joint religious history and a shared religious experience can give? To enjoy a liberty of worship—which is not threatened; to stand simply in the hereditary ways—when the historical interest is allowed to wane; to emphasize the testimony of truth—when each speaks only for himself, and the complaint of the pew against the pulpit is 'Too much Theology!'—these are no longer common aims which can turn the weekly assemblage of individuals into a *church*.

There is a great deal in our recent experience that is scarcely special to us; on all sides, we hear, ecclesiastical attachments are being worn very loose; men do not want to be sorted into theological compartments and labelled with doctrinal names; and the *minimum predicabile* concerning a man's personal religious belief is, that he goes to this church or to that chapel. And the things which men will combine and organise upon, are not those which the churches distinctively put before them. And so *we* are discussing problems—*how to attach, how to retain*; are popularizing our institutions; are trying experiments over which our older members sometimes shake their heads, and wonder whether these things are marks of *religious* activity: while, on the other hand, we are challenged to cast away all such hesitancy of feeling, to swallow the scruples of bygone sentiment, and at one sweep abolish all incongruities, by proclaiming our churches to be simply '*associations for doing good*.'

We who have never made a main object of saving ourselves out of this present evil world—who can point to a long list of our co-religionists foremost in every good work—educational, social, reformatory—cannot be indifferent to any challenge to more extended and more systematic public usefulness. We feel the deepest satisfaction in the work of our Domestic Missions, and have reason to be thankful that our young people more and more appreciate the heroic work of our missionaries, and are led by this sympathy into taking some real part in their labour or endeavouring something in the same spirit for themselves. We believe that anything that can make this world and this life better or happier is intensely worth doing; we have an increased respect for the ordinary life of the ordinary man going about his own ways: we are more touched than former generations were by what a philosopher calls "the intuition of the common lot.' And what is our hope when we look to the social future of the people among whom we live? How much do we trust to education, sanitation, industrial legislation, and enlightened self-interest? Our pictures and our music—if they could wake a sensitiveness to the vile and the mean, and a passion for the decencies and sweetnesses of life—would they absolve us from the effort to touch the heart with the awe of God, and calm it with the peace which passeth understanding? How shall we teach a reverence before the mysteries of life, and a quiet simplicity of resolve before its moral issues, to those who 'have learned never to be ashamed in the presence of anything'? 'What,' cried Mrs. Barnett, from the East End, 'what can restore to this people the priceless gift of spirituality?' And how can we preach, how can we make actual, 'the *potential spirituality of all secular life*'? If we are poor in the religious inspiration of enthusiasm, if we refrain from words as to the deeper needs of the soul, leave our relation to the religious future of the people merely an open question, and seem, whether we like it or not, by our indifference to justify theirs—it must be, I suppose, either because we have confidence in the evolution or

discovery of a *new faith*, when there shall be a new social state ready to complete its polity by the adoption of it, or because we are content to leave this religious future to be divided between Catholicism on the one hand, and the ultra-evangelicalism of the Salvation-army type on the other.

The question has come upon us almost too suddenly, and it presses for a reply. We have scarcely learnt the lesson of our eclectic individualism, when we are asked if we can make of it a gospel than can save men's souls alive now and here, save humanity from being all swallowed up in the natural man that knoweth not the things of God. We do not perhaps quite naturally use the old language of spiritual things, and we have not found a new one. We have been thinking of Christianity as one of the temporary forms of universal religion. We have read of late the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures not as sole channels of Divine revelation, but as testifying to the constant facts of the soul's life amid all varieties of nature and circumstance, read most truly when the word quickens the waning religious consciousness of the reader, and he can endorse the experience of a past age and say, 'The word of the Lord came to me also.' And yet the words are so many and various, and the God who inspires so far above them all, so far beyond complete expression in any—an old thought catches the light to-day, and shines with new radiance, while the truth of yesterday has grown prematurely old—that we dare not say with assurance, 'Lo, here!' or 'Lo, there!' A theology for ourselves, as the rationale of our personal religion, we have had little time to think out; and our *religion itself* has been so much a matter of our own impressions, our inexplicable sentiments, our hallowed associations, our cherished memories, that we cannot share it with another, and know that it would not perfectly serve a second turn. And as, in such a frequent halting-point of the religious character as I am trying to indicate, historical Christianity becomes the temporary adumbration of the absolute

religion, approximating nearer to it from age to age, as the transient and the concrete drop away, so does the Christ of the Gospels and of the Church become in thought but a type, progressive here, arrested there, of the ideal man, 'the man-child glorious' of whom 'the whole creation travaileth in pain.' And so our Parkers and our Emersons have fixed for us the home of the ideal in the future; and we seem only to have recovered from the mists of the past the true impress of personal features, the warmth of personal presence, the understanding of historic conditions, to be told that religion is no longer founded on ancient history: processes of evolution in the physical world are quoted to show how impersonal, how unconscious, must be the movements whereby the destiny of mankind is wrought. May we have, then, the happy assurance that, whether we labour or whether we forbear, it will be all the same in 'some far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves'? Surely not.

I accept every hopeful prediction of such great leaders as I have named: I cannot believe that the past exhausts either the individual or social possibilities of man in the designs of God: I believe in the action of *spiritual law in the natural world*: but I would, in conclusion, suggest one or two considerations affecting *our duty* as 'fellow-workers together with God' in the structure of the greater future.

Side by side with our faith in Evolution, let us set the warning which is to be derived from the co-ordinate phenomena of Degeneration. As faculties of the living organism are developed by new needs, by adaptation to new environment, so are others allowed to dwindle through lack of exercise, and the change that throws the balance of power in one direction closes its chance against some alternative of future form, device or ability. We carry about with us the stunted survivals of muscles which savage man is actually using every day; and a few generations of disuse might extirpate one of the faculties which seems to

us a very essential of progressive humanity. And so, in the relations of man and man, we are apt to think that, as soon as this or that stress or crisis is over, old feelings that we have persistently neglected to cultivate and have contentedly thought to be dormant all the while, will spring up naturally again as we have leisure to cultivate them, and are shocked and surprised to discover that the very foundations on which we were going to rear the social future are removed, and that the old appeals have lost their charm. Think in how brief a time the religious faculty, the unselfish sensibility, fades away. Think how, without challenge from without, without sustenance from within, the soul dies of inanition and atrophy. The scant rays of the heavenly radiance fade into the light of common day; and while we are thinking what we can safely say to another, wondering whether we know enough to speak, the need of the aching heart is being felt no more, and conscience is giving up the struggle, and disappointment is settling into hardness and levity; another atom of humanity is given over to a reprobate mind, and the kingdom of God is that much farther off.

Again, I would remind you (I cannot attempt to show you) how every feature of the ideal we place before us is the product of a realized past. If there is one conviction borne in upon us by the study of early Christianity, it is that it is primarily not a system, but the breathing of a free aspiration, catching hold of all the elements of devout hope, and speaking a language of infinite desire. Its *faith* stands now for the open side of the soul, free to accessions of new strength and power from the Spirit that worketh in us and with us; and now, directed to the person of Christ, it not merely stands for the fact that 'reverence for persons gives us apprehension of truth in ideas,' but is a moving impulse, a baptism of moral unselfishness, whereby every sacrifice that personal attachment can inspire becomes the natural devotion of the religious soul. I know not how the Theist

can outgrow the conception of the *state of the future* as *the kingdom of God*; and I know not how the Christian can pass beyond (though he has frequently found it convenient to ignore) the fact that Jesus stands in the disciple's eye not as the once realized divine idea of man, for ever closed to the attainment of future generations—not as the unique phenomenon that should force him to explain its inimitableness by a theory that places it beyond humanity not only in achievement, but in initial nature and endowment—but as in his life the *law of the spirit* unto all who find in contact with him the truth concerning their own nature, realize that the same spirit which was in him is in them, and, conformed to it, live their life in the flesh in the knowledge of the Son of God in them too. Nay, the very words which are strained to take him from our side, carry us with him into the very heights of which our ambition has hardly dreamed. Is he more than man?—it is that we, too, may be 'partakers of the Divine nature;' that we, like him, may be filled with all the fulness of God; nay, says the quiet boldness of that very writer who has seemed to exalt him as Son of God beyond our ken, even beyond our sympathy: 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we *shall be like him*.' How true, how needful, for us now is this drawing close of the real and the ideal, this reading of the absolute in the terms of that which we know! Can it be nought to us, when our faith in ourselves grows weak, and our outlook upon the future waxes dim—when the absolute becomes merely the impalpable, and we lose the sense of God among the infinities—when His ways seem too slow to allow the labour of our fleeting days to hold any place in the working of His will, and we begin to doubt whether the very things for which we spend and are spent are part of His ways at all—for, after all, *who knoweth the mind of the Lord?*—is it nought to us to have, as *we* have, within the facts of human

history, within the records of the common lot, *the mind of Christ*? Not explained away by gospel questions, not complicated by theories of two natures or double consciousness, *on us falls full* the incidence of that mind, that life, that spirit, that example. It claims us for the law of the spirit, of the sonship, of the life; cheers us with a new hope, calms us with a new patience, blesses us with a new companionship. In his heart the great words, the admitted but neglected truths of religion, press into life; the very considerations that looked vague and abstract are found as the closest sanctions of daily duty and daily forbearance. Nothing is too little, because to God there is no great and no small; no task is humble to the children of the Highest. We may not judge one another any more, while God is kind to the unthankful and evil; we may not flag, while our Father worketh continually; we may not murmur, while our Father knoweth we have need. Have we no word to say, no testimony to bear, as we mark the paralysis of soul about us, which means degeneracy and decline in the scale of spiritual being—while our brethren doubt *whether it is any good to be good*, and whether it *will not be all the same a hundred years hence whether they believe in God or not?* Does it not fall to us especially to hold together the straining links between past and future, between history and poetry, between that which we know in part and the perfect thing we hope for—to transmit our simple word, till we need teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother no more, *for all shall know God* in the inner covenant of the spirit—nay, more, to bend heart and soul to the transmission of the Christian character to the generations yet to come, until once again the morning stars sing together, and the spheral chime rings in the *Christ that is to be*?

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