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Spiritual Aloneness



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THAT I MIGHT KNOW HIM

That I might know him! Let this be life's aim,
Still to explore the wealth stored in His Name.
With heaven-bought intelligence to trace
The glories that light up His sinless Face:
That I might know His power day by day,
Protecting, guiding in the upward way:
That I might know His Presence, calm and pure,
Changeless midst changes, and midst losses sure:
To dwell with Him, in spirit, day and night;
To walk with Him by faith, if not by sight;
To work with Him, as He shall plan, not I:
To cleave to Him, and let the world go by:
To live on earth a life of self-less love;
To set the mind and heart on things above:
Till I shall see Him without vision dim,
And know Him as I know I'm known of Him.

M. I. R.

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SPIRITUAL ALONENESS

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IN all the deeper experiences of the spiritual life the soul must tread a solitary way. There are blessings that come to us through our being component parts of the family, of the community, or the church. But those which have to do with our eternal relationships find us in our individuality dealing directly with the realities of the unseen. There are no greater mysteries than are wrapped up in these two small words: "God" and "I". There is an ocean of meaning in these drops of language. It will take us all our days, and then the work will have only begun, to find out their depths.

Jacob, we are told, was "left alone," when "there wrestled a Man with him till the breaking of the day." It was the crisis of his life and he had to go through it alone. He bore the marks of that midnight struggle to the end, for he came out of it crippled and broken, yet a divinely blessed man. In the dust he became a prince. In the loneliness he saw God face to face, and the heavenly vision stamped his character with an indelible mark. Is it any wonder that God loved to be called more frequently "the God of Jacob" than by any other name? Jacob was by no means an amiable character. His brother Esau appeals to the observer much more at first sight. But Jacob was a man whose spirit reached out after the divine. Heaven, as far as we know, never opened to Esau. Angels never appeared to the man who

preferred the mess of pottage to the privilege of priestly office in the patriarchal succession, the chosen vessels of blessing to all the families of the earth. Esau never had a Peniel, never cared to be alone with God.

And it is so today. I care not what the natural bent may be, aloneness with God will elevate and refine the most unpromising. Jacobs may still become Israels and beggars of the dust princes of the aristocracy of heaven. You cannot eradicate the Jewish temperament. It has a strange persistency. But it can be refined by becoming charged with the divine.

Of all the sons of men only One did not need the ordeal of repentance. Repentance is a lonely piece of business. Sin isolates from God and from one's fellows also. Repentance is an entering into the sense of this isolation and feeling its gravity. Though our Holy Redeemer did not know repentance for Himself, the heart of His atoning sacrifice consists in His repentance for others. And to Him, too, it was lonely struggle in the darkness, rejected of earth and forsaken of heaven, as far as His consciousness went in that solemn hour. But if He repented for us, He did not repent instead of us, that is, to let us off from repentance. The lonely path of repentance is the one that leads to that door opened in Christ into the blessedness that is found in God.

A striking picture of the loneliness of the ordeal of repentance is given by the Prophet Zechariah in these words: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they

shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day there shall be a great mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Shimei (or Simeon as LXX) apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." (Zech. XII:9-14.)

It is a picture of national confession of sin, but the repentance is profoundly individual. No one accuses another. Everyone smites his own breast. David and Nathan weep apart; Nathan cannot go to David now, he has enough to do with his own guilt. Levi and Simeon had been partners in wickedness; but no one dares to excuse his own share of the guilty deed. Husbands and wives get away from each other to be alone with God. The agony of repentance must be gone through in solitude.

All true prayer requires aloneness with God for its exercise. Hear the Master on this great subject: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Of course these words have more than a letter meaning. There is only one inner cham-

ber, there is only one secret place, there is only one holy realm where the human meets the divine and that is within. The door that must be shut is the consciousness of the external world. When we enter the secret place, visible and external things must be shut out. We have not begun to pray until we have reached this inner chamber; and we have not yet discovered a permanent center of peace till we have come to the inner kingdom, "a house of defense" from all outward storms and disturbances, where we are engaged in the adoration of the divine perfections, in the silence of love and worship. The essence of true prayer is its solitariness—God and I—the finite personality of the human swallowed up in the infinite personality of the divine, whether vocal exercise is called for or not.

When Saul of Tarsus caught a glimpse of the purpose of God with his life, as one separated from his mother's womb and called by the voice of the Spirit within, as well as by the voice that spake to him in the Hebrew tongue out of the midst of the brightness eclipsing the noon day sun, on the Damascus road: even that it was the good pleasure of the Father to reveal His Son in him and not only to him: that thus he might be a vessel, broken but sanctified, to carry Him about, before kings and slaves, before Jews and Gentiles: immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, neither did he turn to the older apostles, but he retired into Arabia, there to listen to that still, small voice of calm that succeeded the earthquake, whirlwind and fire experiences through which

he had passed. And out of that silence, that aloneness and solitude, he came forth the apostle to the nations.

And in this self-same school of aloneness with God, first-hand witnesses to divine Truth are still being formed and qualified for their service towards our busy, fussy and talkative twentieth century.

WHO IS THIS JESUS?

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THE most pressing enquiry, the most vital consideration of the twentieth century, is concerning that strange Man called Jesus, who appeared in far away Palestine in the first century.

There is a mysterious fascination about the Man. We simply cannot leave Him alone. His influence has been haunting the centuries down the avenues of time. And though like Himself, His cause has been rejected, crucified and buried again and again, it has always had a resurrection, and then calmly resumed its conquering advance.

The cause with which His Name is linked, and which is known in the world as Christianity, is based on the belief that He was more than a teacher of ethics. That if He died, His death was more than a martyrdom. That if He lived again after death, it was by a resurrection, and not by mere spiritual survival which is common to all men. That in Him the Eternal Logos became flesh. Now we may study Him from three sides. We may think of Him as a fact in history. We may consider Him as a factor in experience. We may regard Him as the central sun around which Christian thought revolves. He is the Christ of history, of experience, and of Christian thought.

He is not only the central theme of sacred literature. He is besides the most dominant factor in the never-ceasing ebb and flow, action and reaction, advance and retrogression, in the affairs of men and nations. He is also an unescapable

Presence in the heart, rebuking, consoling, guiding and commanding, where men become still enough to listen to His voice.

We are living in an age of science. The scientific method of arriving at conclusions is by the stages of hypothesis, followed by experiment, and after the testing out of the latter, of assured knowledge. The experiment has then become an experience. We may without the slightest hesitation apply this method to the study of Christ.

(1) The report has reached us, from what would appear trustworthy sources, that the friends of Jesus had "many infallible proofs" of His resurrection. Some of us have accepted this report on its face value, and have found the message of His being alive today a spring of unspeakable help and power. But others, more scientifically trained, hesitate to take the report thus. Let them then start with the *hypothesis*, assuming that the report is true.

(2) Then let them take the next step. *Apply* the hypothesis, venture on the faith that it is true that Jesus actually rose again and is living today, "closer to us than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." And we dare to assert that they will find it work. Go to the Living One as men and women went to Him in the long ago. Bring Him your sins and your sorrows, your fetters and your failures, your doubts and your distresses, your soul's sickness and sadness. See if He will not prove Himself abundantly able to save! See if He will not supply the living water that can quench soul-thirst! See if He will not bring you to live under the sense of opened heavens!

(3) Then comes assured and inward knowledge. The Christ of the *Book* becomes the "Christ in *you*, the hope of glory." Not that we may then dispense with the Book. Nay, it is confirmed and established. It becomes illuminated, and interpreted as never before. As in the beginning, the Law was "a schoolmaster" to bring the first Christians to Christ. Then the Law itself became luminous, as re-interpreted by Him to whom it led. So many of us have found it. The Scriptures which led us to the Saviour, in whom alone is the eternal life, have in turn been testified to by the Risen Christ, and have become a mirror reflecting His glory, into which looking with increasing wonder, we may become changed from glory to glory, as the Spirit increasingly unveils Him to our eyes.

A MAN IN CHRIST

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THIS is Paul's great word. It is his monogram, in which he condenses his message, and articulates the mystical experience which was the secret of his life. Paul was conscious of Christ, and his passion was to bring others into his consciousness. And we too may share his secret as present-day initiates into the mystery of Christ. Christ was to Paul more than an appearance in the long ago. He is the all-pervading, ever-active Spirit of redeeming love and wisdom in the world of nature and of human history. The universe expresses Him. Its beauty, order, design, are the features of His character.

Now if Christ be indeed the explanation of the universe, what vistas of blessedness open up to view at the prospect of the possibility of living our little lives "in Him"! And this is the very heart of Christian experience. We treasure up the golden sayings of the Teacher who was once among men. We study the example of the Master the Gospels have enshrined. We reverently believe the recorded testimony concerning His mighty deeds. But "in Christ" makes Him *a present fact*. If the Incarnation has shown us how redeeming love is necessary to the divine self-revelation, as well as creative power; "in Christ" shows us that this redeeming love has become our abiding possession, is today resident in the world, available and accessible. We may live in its atmosphere. We may breathe in purity, health and gladness. It

may become our environment in which the germs of selfishness and lust are rendered innocuous.

If any man be thus in Christ, he will certainly become a new creature. And not only he himself, but his outward circumstances will become new also. Old things will be transformed. There may be no change to the outward eye. The old difficulties, thorny problems and temptations still face us. But we look out upon life through other eyes and from a new point of view. A new light shines upon everything. Life, once so grey and dull, becomes irradiated. Common duties become invested with dignity, and little things, as they seem, charged with eternal meaning. A man in Christ carries Christ about. He cannot but express Him. Living in the divine today, the past cannot haunt him, neither does he need to peer into the misty future, so as to forget the present. Amidst constant change and flux he is fixed in the immovable center of all things. And he finds this divine center everywhere. From this place of rest flow, through those who have found it, rivers of living water. The divine good wants to impart itself to all around, be they what they may, evil or good. The divine bounty knows no frontiers. It is like the sunshine, the rain, the health-giving breeze. A man in Christ is a world-overcomer. Alas! Christianity has taken the place of Christ, and it makes a poor substitute! From men in Christ emanate healing forces which can cast out the evil passions tearing at the world's heart. Paul tells us that "in Christ" we have as our present portion eternal life. And what does this great

gift of eternal life mean? It means eternal *youth*, eternal *health*, eternal *development*, eternal *energy* and *joy in producing*, eternal *progress* and *growth*, eternal *ascent*, ever higher, step by step, from light to light, upwards into the infinite, the unbounded, the divine.

And Christ is the open door into this blessedness for those who live and walk in Him by faith and love.

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN

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IF at Cæsarea Philippi the apostle Peter confessed openly his great discovery of the Christ, fruit of light from the heavenly world, he, in turn, was told that that Divine work in his soul would be the foundation on which Christ could build an indestructible church

Moreover he was told that he now possessed those qualities which entitled him to be entrusted with "the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven."

A good deal of controversy has raged around these words. They certainly do not mean that St. Peter stands at the gate of heaven with authority to open or shut that gate to those who would enter. For not the Keys of *heaven*, but "of the *Kingdom* of heaven," had been placed in his hand. That Kingdom is a realm of Divine good here and now. It is a radiant sphere of love, beauty and harmony in which the soul may find "an house of defence" from the discordant notes and the sordid scenes of this outward and passing world. It is heaven's dominion on earth; not in the future, but today. The Lord disclosed to the fisherman-disciple the nature of true ministry. He was to open the mystic gates into true blessedness to those hungering and thirsting to know it. And Peter afterwards knew how to use those Keys to advantage. On the day of Pentecost he admitted three thousand penitent Jews into the Kingdom of heaven; and in the home of Cornelius, the God-fearing Roman officer, he opened the door into life to a company

of seeking Gentiles. And on both occasions his action was ratified by the outpoured Spirit reaching to the hearts of men. These Keys he received direct from his Lord. And he had no mandate to pass them on to other hands when his own became too feeble to hold them. There is no apostolic succession of Keyholders by ecclesiastical appointment. The Lord Himself retains within His own jurisdiction the handing over the Keys of His Kingdom to those in whom He sees what He saw in Peter, the work of His Father Who is in heaven, giving insight and producing boldness. Such ministers speak with the authority of a heaven-given experience and not as the scribes. From a sphere too high for mere reason to enter, though not against reason, they draw the light which illuminates their message and which brings light to those who sit in the darkness of ignorance or sin.

The world is waiting for such teachers. Thousands are standing outside the door of the Kingdom and cannot find the way in. They are waiting anxiously for the man with the Keys.

From time to time such men have been raised up. There is a great dearth of such men today. Hence the strange unrest, the flotsam and jetsam of drifting souls, trying out the various cults which, like clouds without water, promise so much and give so little. And not only are the seeking multitudes looking out for such. Our Divine Lord also, as at Cæsarea Philippi, is looking out for men of spiritual insight and illumination to whom He can entrust the Keys of the Kingdom of heaven. And if He cannot find such in our Jerusalems, He will find them again, as of old, among the peasants and fishermen of our Galilees.

REASON AND REVELATION

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THE question concerning the source of our knowledge of God is fundamental in its character. Can the human intelligence discover Him, or must we look to a divine revelation? Does revelation set aside reason, or does reason confirm revelation? In case reason and revelation appear to differ, shall reason be exalted above revelation? What is the province of reason, and what are its limitations?

It is admitted that the reason is the noblest attribute of human nature. But like every other inborn faculty it needs to be trained and developed by exercise. And it is a serious question whether we are born into the world in the state of unspoiled goodness, or rather in a condition of impaired capacity, so that the understanding is in danger of being darkened by the natural selfishness that marks human nature as we know it. If so, then we need something more than education. We need that divine grace that can set the mind free from the hypnotism of sin.

It would also appear that while reason can arrive at the conviction that there is a God, tracing His footprints and reading His autograph in His works; would we obtain a knowledge of God, in order to experience Him, God must so reveal Himself, that man can say I have now met Him whose foot-tracks I have been following so long.

The revelation which God makes of Himself to man must in its very nature be twofold. It must

be objectively regarded as a divine action in itself; and it must be inward, influencing the mind, the conscience and the affections of man. Creation is clearly a divine self-display, in other words, a revelation. But the mind which is spiritually-blind does not react towards creation as to a Word of God. The same is true of the Incarnation, of the manifestation of the redeeming love of God in the Person of Christ, and of the Holy Scriptures, which are declared to be the result of the divine inbreathing, even as the heavens and the earth were made by the breath of God, and the Incarnation, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. An objective divine revelation is only self-evident to that man whose spiritual faculties have been awakened to appreciate it.

The above thoughts would indicate the *necessity* of a divine revelation. But is such a revelation *possible*? The most satisfactory answer to this question seems to be that, as we are personalities, individuals endowed not only with self-consciousness but with self-awareness, and accepting as fundamental that man is in the image of God, a God who is a Personality, who has in Himself the perfection of that which man feels he holds but in a limited way, would want to reveal Himself to man in order to lift man into communion with Himself. Man's discovery of God is only possible if God allows Himself to be discovered; in other words, if God reveals Himself.

There is in man, even in the state of pagan darkness, a mysterious urge for God. The apostle Paul admitted on Mars Hill that the pagan world was "feeling after God." Out of that urge have sprung many noble thoughts and sentiments; they

are crystallized in the different schools of philosophy of India, Hellas and China. But they proved inadequate. In the story of the wise men who sought the Christ, the star led them to Jerusalem. But they did not find the way to the object of their search, that they might fall down and worship Him, till their star glimmer was supplemented by the brighter light that came to them from the volume of revelation, viz: from those prophetic scriptures which pointed to Bethlehem as the place where the Messiah was to be born. So God has spoken, in former ages in fragments through prophets, in these last days in His Son, as we hold, not in fragments, but fully and finally. All other beams of light are broken rays of His effulgence. And from His countenance shall all darkness and doubt be banished as the shadows of night before the rising sun.

CERTAINTY AND FELLOWSHIP

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WITHOUT some certainty there cannot be fellowship between human beings. But certainty is like happiness, a by-product and not an end in itself. Convictions alone produce certainty. And we form convictions when we find that we are in touch with reality. This is a fundamental feature of personality. Now personality seeks fellowship with its kindred. We come out of our isolation when we find others with whom we can share our convictions. It is thus that human society has been formed.

The same process may be observed in that society which is known as the Christian church. Its fellowship is also composed of those who cherish the same convictions. The church's enthusiasm for effective work in the world depends on these convictions producing certainty. The entire edifice will disintegrate should the glowing convictions which formed the fellowship grow dim and fade away.

When we speak of Christian fellowship we mean that fellowship which is based on certainty respecting Christ. In that fellowship there is a sharing with each other the same convictions concerning Him, rooted in a common experience. He makes His own impress upon the individuals composing the fellowship. There may be considerable diversity of response to that impress, or even in the strength of it. This leaves room for further growth and progress, and also draws out the patient and loving ministrations of the more ad-

vanced. But the entire fellowship is held together by one mystic bond: the discovery and appreciation, in greater or lesser degree, but in some degree, nevertheless, of the reality and preciousness of Christ.

As a matter of history, the Person of Christ has always been central and supreme in Christianity. From the beginning there was given to Him more than a teacher's place. Nor has He been regarded as only the founder of a new religion or cult, such as Buddha or Mahomet might have been. All Christians would subscribe to the declaration of the apostle Paul, when he said: "Christ who is our life." To question His supreme authority is to tamper with the very life of the church. The centuries that separate us from the story recorded in the Gospels are lengthening out. But we do more than look back to Christ. We look up to Him. And we are as sure of Him as of our own life. Hence our certainty. This certainty is not mere dogmatism demanded by some external "authority". It is the certainty which the inherent authority of absolute truth necessarily imposes. Truth has no need of an external authority to certify its veracity. All who are of the truth intuitively bow before it.

Christ stands for His church as the embodiment of the final truth about God. He also stands as the supreme symbol of the character which every human being cannot but approve of as the standard for him, to which Christians are humbly striving to attain, as it will be the accepted type for all mankind when the Kingdom of God has reached

its goal. Christians have not arrived at these certainties by intellectual analysis. They are reached by those who steadily abide with Him as He is spiritually revealed. Then they will come to know Him in a more intimate way than even His recorded utterances alone are able to make Him known. It is by this spiritual appreciation of Him that the Christian fellowship is formed and held together.

A NEW DEFINITION OF PROSPERITY

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THE devotional literature of ancient Israel, of which the Psalter is the main section, not only records the calm faith in, and the jubilant certainty of, the living God that marked the pre-Christian saints, but also tells us of their doubts, their penitential confessions, their heart-sinkings in the presence of the mysteries of life and death. We are permitted, as it were, to be eavesdroppers to some of the most intimate communications that passed between the lonely, struggling, perplexed human soul and its Maker; to hear how it wrestled with its problems and prayed itself out of uncertainty into assurance. In the remarkably autobiographical book of the prophet Jeremiah, for instance, we have many passages which record such secret outpourings of heart; the Psalms are full of them also; and they make us feel that those ancients were men of like passions with ourselves.

Life was by no means easy to the thoughtful Israelite. He had to walk by faith, as we have, and not by sight, to justify the often inscrutable ways of Providence, and he had not the benefit of the light which shines for us from the Person of Christ, the key to the enigmas of earth. Nevertheless, light was given to him, sufficient light to travel by—or else life would have been unendurable. But the complete solution of his difficulties awaited the coming of Him who said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”—John viii. 12.

Let me take up some of these problems and their Divine treatment. There was first of all the problem of suffering. The Psalms, as other books of the Old Testament, are shot through with feelings of perplexity on account of unexplained suffering. Hence the repeated cry of "Why?" and "How long?"—utterances which have been called "Faith's mighty question." Why do the righteous suffer? Why does trouble come upon the innocent? It is so easy to get transfixed on the horns of a dilemma. Either God sends trouble, or "an enemy has done it." Would a *good* God send trouble to a good man? If not, would an *almighty* God allow His enemy to do so? Either God is not good, or, if good, not almighty. A terrible conclusion to come to.

We know how the entire book of Job deals with this problem. Job was a righteous man, and yet calamity upon calamity came upon him. His friends held the naive faith that *piety* and *prosperity* must always go together. Job was stripped of the latter, *ergo*, he never was a pious man! He must have been a hypocrite all along! This was their way of justifying the character of God. But it was all false, as Job felt; though he expressed that feeling in a rather vehement way, of which he afterwards repented in dust and ashes when he came face to face with the Almighty.

Now how did the Psalmist find peace in thinking of this painful enigma? He still held with Psalm i. that the godly man is the truly prosperous man. But he got a new definition of prosperity. Wherein does it consist? In earthly values? Nay, in communion with God, in the light of His countenance, in the joy and blessedness of His daily

companionship. See Psalm iv.: "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" (*good* is the equivalent of *happiness* in the Hebrew). "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us! Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and their wine increased."

Or take Psalm lxxiii. Asaph, its author, was in sore confusion over the prosperity of the wicked and his own troubles, though he was a sincere worshiper of the God of Israel. As a singing Levite the Lord alone was his portion, and that meant poverty and want for him when Israel was slack in bringing the tithes into the storehouse.

But when he returned into the sanctuary, he saw the whole problem in a new light. The light of heaven made the enigmas of earth look very different. How rich he was in God! Guided by His counsel, he looked forward to be received up in glory. In the spirit of adoration he exclaimed, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. . . It is good for me (or "it is my happiness") to draw near unto God." A new content was put into the word "prosperity". Spiritual values made earthly gains look mean and beggarly. He had disquieted himself in vain.

And this mighty discovery of wherein true happiness and prosperity consisted gave the Old Testament saints victory over suffering. It really antedated for them the teaching of the Christ, who,

in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew vi. 19-21) bids His disciples transfer their affections from earth to heaven, where no moth nor rust can corrupt, where no banks fail, and no financial depressions can occur. For, where the treasure is there will the heart be also. And if the treasure become corroded—and all earthly treasure, sooner or later, will become so—the rust will get into the heart. But how glad, and sweet, and free from corroding care, is the heart of a true disciple whose supreme quest is the blessings of the heavenly places, where nothing spoils, and nothing fades, but where everlasting life flows on in its deathless course.

And the Old Testament people of God had a foretaste of this in their day.

Suffering, for the rightly exercised Jew, became a discipline, a divinely-given help to detach his affections from earth, to break the hypnotic spell of things seen and temporal, to create the heart of a stranger here and of a pilgrim to the coming city of God. We know that this was the very essence of the faith-life of Abraham, the father of the chosen seed and of all them that believe. Even when in the enjoyment of the land of promise, the Israelite was instructed that he was a stranger and a sojourner *with God*, the true Owner of the land. (See Leviticus xxv. 23). For in the fulness of time, when incarnate, God was a stranger in His own world and in His own land (John i. 10, 11), unrecognized and despised—yea, He was “cut off and had nothing” (Daniel ix. 26, R. V.) in the

person of the Messiah, the Prince. And if Christ suffered without the camp, bearing His reproach, so did the godly sufferers in Israel, before His earthly advent, bear "the reproach of Christ" in anticipation (Hebrews xi. 24-26). They trod the suffering path of the Messiah yet to come; they had fellowship with Him in His rejection, and in the day of His coronation they will be glorified with Him also.

THE UNAVOIDABLE CHRIST

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EVERY man has somehow to do with Christ and Christ has to do with him. The world did not succeed in getting rid of Him when it crucified Him outside the gates of Jerusalem. He is still in the world and a factor to be reckoned with. Christ is no back-number, no mere figurehead of ancient history. Neither is He a mere looker on from a distance, but He is in the midst of the struggle and pain of humanity. He inspires and energizes whatever is pure and noble, true and worthy in any life. He is the true Light that lighteth every man coming into the world, and our twentieth century cannot escape Him.

O that men everywhere might awake to the fact that they are living in Christ's world, that He is resident in it! Not only is He in the world of nature as His continuous creation, He is also in the world of humanity, the sphere of His spiritual operations. True, "We see not yet all things put under Him." But "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor." While earthly thrones and dominions totter in this day of strife and confusion, He is seen on His throne, the conquering Lamb whose seven-fold Spirit is going forth into all the earth, to be the life and inspiration of every willing soul.

There are men who tell us that they take no interest in spiritual things. They profess to be unaware of any mystical undercurrent in their make-up. They are of the earth earthy. Animal functions make up their daily round, and carnal

pleasures furnish their supreme aim. And yet they, too, have met with this mysterious Christ, though they know it not. Whence comes the strange irruption of something higher and nobler into their self-bound world? It may be only a momentary feeling of disgust after a debauch. It may be a spontaneous welling up of a purer feeling, a sudden inspiration of goodness and unselfish love, apparently coming out of the nowhere; or a strange reaching out, in a moment of difficulty or danger, after an unseen Guide and Helper, an inarticulate cry in the dark. The most corrupt of men, the spiritually and morally "down and out", have had these moments which evidence the presence of Christ and the working of His Spirit. These fitful gleams come from the Sun of Righteousness seeking to pierce the deep gloom and longing to bring the healing of heaven into their sin-stricken lives.

When Christ, the Light of the world, was among men outwardly, His presence had a two-fold effect. It was a revealing and a healing Light. His presence as the Light of our twentieth century may be known by the same features. If men would only welcome the light which reveals their spiritual malady how quickly they would experience the healing of the Light also. As we open to the penetrating rays of His Spirit we shall find Him a quick reprover of and a swift witness against evil thoughts and desires, the hidden roots of outward acts. And as we submit to these inward judgments we shall discover with joy that the *Judge* and the *Saviour* are one, that the inshining light of Christ becomes our new nature in which we are the children of Light and experience redemption

from the power of the darkness to which we were enslaved before.

But though the unseen Christ is verily present today, so that we have more than a Christ of sacred history, and more than a Christ of prophecy—the first, a hallowed memory; the second, a sublime hope—it is faith alone which can avail itself of the benefits of His spiritual Presence. Even as when outwardly present and active in far-off Galilee, it was by faith that human need^d liberated the healing virtue that was in Him. But what is faith? It is no mere assent to a proposition or the blind acceptance of a creed, “believing where we cannot prove.” Faith passes through three stages: (1) By faith we *recognize*; (2) By faith we *receive*; (3) By faith we *realize*. A man must begin by recognizing that that mysterious Something that at times knocks at his inner door is *Some One*. Recognizing the Divine approach he receives Christ by welcoming Him. And receiving sooner or later means realizing. He that *thus* believeth in the Son “hath the witness in himself,” an inward realization deepening with the lengthening years.

That Christ has to do with every man, and that every man has to do with Christ, may appear to many a mystical dream. In reality it is an intensely practical and world-transforming doctrine. For if the poor are Christ’s poor, we may show our love to *Him* by ministering to them. If the hardships of the outclassed are felt by Christ, if the task-master’s lash falls on His back, the toil of the modern “factory hand”, the wage-slave of the capitalists, appears in a new light, and social reforms become religious problems. And^d how

dreadful to seduce innocence, to cause one of Christ's little ones to stumble, or to victimize the ignorant! It is a sin against Christ, and not merely a crime against society. And does not this truth strike at the very foundations of war? Can any man be now to me an "alien enemy?" Shall I hurt or destroy the potential image and temple of God? The larger vision of Christ gives us a new vision of man and furnishes us with a new motive to serve Him. Even the wrong-doer is Christ's friend and is to be forgiven for His sake, as the wronged is Christ's brother, whose cause Christ makes His own. The least done to others, good or ill, is done as unto Christ. Every act of kindness goes beyond the immediate object, it terminates in Christ who as the Son of Man has made himself one with humanity. Every act of injury done to another is felt by Him, and to every persecutor He still says: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?" The cry of the oppressed for justice is the controversy of Christ with our unchristian civilization.

Men painfully conscious of their inbred corruptions would *do* good if they could only *feel* good. I say to every man, "Cease to do evil, learn to do good," whatever the feeling may be, and begin right away. Do good and thou wilt *feel* good, as the effect follows the cause. And this is not self-righteousness, for every suggestion of good is the prompting of the Spirit of Christ. And surely the worst man has had some good suggested to him again and again. We have heard of the necessity of repentance and faith in order to salvation. Now repentance is simply: "Let go," and faith is: "Let God." Every man knows pretty well what he is required to let go for the sake of his soul's peace.

And if the cruel power of long-indulged habits of evil has hypnotized and captured the very will, so that a man cannot somehow let go the sin which he knows is destroying him, then "let God!" Yea, let God produce the good which with its still, soft voice pleads for recognition and reception. God overcomes evil with good. For be it known by every man that the least suggestion of good is an incorruptible Seed out of which the Christ-life is begotten and formed in the human heart. And in Christ who is our Life, our Salvation stands secure.

OUR THRESHING-FLOOR

OUR THRESHING-FLOOR.

THERE is a beautiful story enshrined in sacred literature of how King David discovered the site of the temple and the place of the altar of burnt-offering. He was guided to the threshing-floor of Arauna the Jebusite.

The owner gladly relinquished the plot of land to the king for the purpose desired, even though it was his means of livelihood, and the king in return richly compensated Arauna for his loyal surrender.

And herein is an allegory, teaching the profound lesson of the sacrament of life; that is, of heaven breaking into glory through the prism of earthly things.

We, too, have a threshing-floor, and our heavenly Lord and King wants to build His altar and rear His temple on the foundation thereof. Life on the plane of the visible is meant to be a seminary for life on the plane of the unseen and eternal. Our daily occupations, however humble, are to become forms of Divine worship. They have higher ends in view than the earning of our living and the securing of the means of an honorable independence or of the obtainment of such lawful pleasures harmonizing with our particular tastes. In the last analysis this mysterious earth-life of ours is sacramental. By the quiet performance of our allotted tasks, however menial, whether we work with brain or brawn; by temptations from within or without, if rightly met; by the difficulties

incidental to our path, if bravely borne; by the cross, which meets us so unexpectedly and in numberless ways, both at home and abroad, if it be cheerfully taken up; by the reflex effect of our intercourse with others, whether congenial or otherwise, the Divine would communicate itself to us, so that heavenly qualities might be formed in our souls. And this deep work most generally proceeds without our being aware of it, below the threshold of our consciousness. Our humble circumstances, arranged by the unseen hand of Divine providence, are meant to be a mystic ladder on which angels unseen continually ascend and descend between us and the heavenly world. As King David built his altar on the threshing-floor of Arauna, so our Divine King would set up His altar in every bank, factory, business house, store, office, market, occupation and home. His Kingdom must come there as well as in the secret hearts of men.

Alas! how readily people listen to the sophistries of the carnal mind at enmity with the cross of Christ! Because the times are evil, corruption in high places frequent, honesty has a hard fight in its competition with dishonesty. Christ's ideals are good enough to be talked about in sermons, but quite impracticable in the hurly-burly of life! But we believe that to let the *other* man be honest first before we are honest is a fundamentally false maxim.

And even common honesty, however praiseworthy, is not the highest ground. For man, made in the image of God who is Spirit, is essentially a spiritual being, and from this standpoint must life in all its parts be taken up. That men prone to be

hypnotized with the passing and the material, and to ignore the spiritual universe, need to be renewed in the spirit of their minds in order to face life in this light, is evident. Unless our inward eyes are opened to behold the beauty, glory, harmony and love of the spiritual world from which we derive our being, we will not readily allow our threshing-floor to become a temple site, the material clod will continue to dominate us, and heaven will be as if closed to our vision. It is not an arbitrary decree, but it lies in the very nature of things, that "except a man be born *from above* he cannot see the kingdom of God."

In Christ Jesus we have the Truth that sets us free to taste the glorious liberty of the children of God. His light shines in the hearts of all to give them the knowledge of the glory of God, if they will but heed it. Prophets have looked forward to the day when the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. But one by one must men come to it, and to "mind the Light" is the sure and certain way.

But when this Divine teaching shall have overspread the world of human thought, then will men live, as they are meant to live, under "opened heavens." Then shall not only the more obvious evils such as slavery, war, intemperance and vice disappear, but class antagonisms and race-prejudices also. Then shall the deserts of life rejoice and blossom as the rose. The smile of heaven can make all things new, even in society with its problems and open sores.

There are Nathaniel-souls who are living under "opened heavens" already. We have met such

again and again. They carry about in their hearts the harmonies of a brighter world amidst the discords of earth. Their threshing-floor has become the basis of a sanctuary. Such are our Lord's fellow-workers. They co-operate with Him in the building of the city of God, not in some far-off sphere, but here amidst human activities and interests, not by the shores of Genesareth merely, but by the banks of the Thames and the Delaware. For all things above and below must yet be gathered into one, even in Christ.

THE MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

THE MYSTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

THERE appear to be three ways of approach to the knowledge of Christ. Each of these ways has its own value, and must not be ignored or belittled on the ground that it is not the only way, or even the most direct. First comes the way of *historical* knowledge. To walk in this way was the unspeakable privilege of the first disciples, even though they were told that it was expedient for them that this privilege should pass away and give place to a still richer experience. It was possible to have been a long time with the Master and not to have known Him, as Philip learned in the upper room.

Perhaps some think we have nothing to do with this way, as nineteen centuries separate us from the historical appearance of our Lord. Yet in a very real sense the Gospels are a continuation of the same. They have for their central theme the unique personality of the Christ. We learn not only what men said of Him but what heaven saw in Him as He trod this earth with undefiled feet. We see Him through the eyes of His contemporaries. We see Him also as the One appreciated in heaven, though misunderstood on earth. Is there a single instance on record when even His disciples properly understood Him? They knew Him too much "after the flesh". That knowledge had to be superseded by spiritual insight. Yet was not their former merely historical knowledge thrown aside as useless. It was like the water which became

wine at the marriage feast. It supplied the material for a deeper and richer life.

Then there is the way of *traditional* knowledge. Ever since Christ and His apostles had set up a monument on earth that should perpetuate the witness to the new revelation known as "Christianity," there has been an unbroken tradition of Christian faith and practice among men. Many devoted men and women labored to secure the maintenance of this tradition. How much we owe to the church's martyrs and confessors and saints! But for their faithfulness in days of rebuke and blasphemy the torch of testimony would have been extinguished. We cannot cut ourselves off from the church's past. We are the children of the centuries which have preceded us. Ought we not to be respectful children? It may be true that a mere tradition cannot give us a vital experience. But it is not without its use. It witnesses to the continuous operation of the divine Spirit in the corporate consciousness of the faithful. This miraculous life of the church has demonstrated the perpetual "Presence," in spite of the fact that she has emerged out of her many conflicts battle-scarred, and with garments torn. Her testimony has often been very faltering in days of crisis. But she has never really capitulated to the enemy. Let us honor the visible church. She has been patient with us, let us be patient with her.

Finally, there is the way of *mystical* knowledge. It is the way the *lovers* of Christ have walked in. It is "hidden" from the wise and prudent, and "revealed" unto babes. It cannot be learned in a college. No philosophy can impart its secret. Even the study of mystical literature, ancient or

modern, will not suffice. Love alone has the key to the inner chamber. Love alone can climb the ladder betwixt earth and heaven. "If a man love Me . . . I will manifest Myself unto him. . . . and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

How can we become such lovers? The answer is: "We love Him because He first loved us." His visible presence is not necessary for this: "Whom not having seen, ye love." This love springs up in penitent hearts which the kiss of forgiveness has made contrite: "She loved much because she was much forgiven." There is the secret place of love's birth. But who can speak of its after history? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, what awaits the true lover. His life is hid with Christ in God. And if for a little while he, too, is hidden, where his Lord was a homeless stranger, he waits for the coming day of manifestation, when he will appear with Christ in glory.

GOD AND ETHICS

GOD AND ETHICS.

THE underlying basis for morality and philanthropy is the fact that man is made in the image of God. If this foundation is destroyed in men's thinking, sooner or later ethics will also deteriorate. There will be no sure way of distinguishing between right and wrong. We cannot safely affirm the importance of right conduct, in so far as it affects our fellowmen, and maintain at the same time that God does not matter. If we put society above God, society will in the end be hurt and not helped. Morality and philanthropy can never be substitutes for God.

Nevertheless, while it is true that we must have a disinterested love for God, delighting in Him for His own sake, the God we delight in is a holy Being, and "without holiness no man shall see (*i. e.*, experience) the Lord." Now the love of our fellows is an essential part of true holiness. Otherwise "holiness" remains mere mystical rapture.

And so history records that those to whom God has been the supreme reality of their lives, and the enjoyment of Him their supreme quest, have been the great lifters up of humanity to nobler planes of living. It was the spiritual enthusiasm in the early church that put an end to the almost universal crime of infanticide, and the degrading gladiatorial sports in the otherwise highly civilized Roman Empire. And it was the same spiritual enthusiasm later on that ended the slave trade, which John Wesley spoke of as "the sum of all vil-

lainies." We might also speak of the alleviation of suffering by the erection of hospitals, and of the liberation of woman from the shackles of inferiority in the social order. We might speak of the work of the noble pioneers for prison reform and temperance. Powerful spiritual forces were the secret source of their labors. Evangelical Christians have no need to be ashamed of their record in the sphere of philanthropy and social justice. There is no charge more unjust than that they have been selfishly engrossed with their own salvation, leaving the world to rot in its evil.

A revival of evangelical enthusiasm, leading to personal surrender to the will of God, and to an experience of His daily guidance, would inevitably overflow into the world in purifying streams of devoted service to our fellowmen. For such a revival let us pray and prepare, for it is the greatest need of the hour.

IN THE MAKING

IN THE MAKING.

ONE of the earliest acts of the Master in His public life, as recorded in Matthew, was the calling of Peter and Andrew, as they were following their craft as fishermen, and the saying to them: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men."

It was a great thing that was asked of these two men of Galilee, and it was a great thing that was held out to them as an incentive—the prospect that the Master would "make" them as they followed Him to be partners of His in the winning of men.

It has often been remarked that Jesus wrote no book, published no poems, introduced no new scientific invention, composed no oratorio, did not figure as a great military leader; in fact, did none of the things for which the world glorifies great men. What He did, and what He does still, is by far greater. He was, and is, the Maker of Men. He says: "Follow Me, and I will make you . . ."

The method by which Jesus made the first disciples reveals consummate wisdom. He did not set them to study out a system of theology or philosophy. He did not put them through a curriculum of "religious education." He placed Himself, His daily life, before them, and said: "Follow Me." Truth was indeed unfolded to them as they went along from stage to stage in company with Him whose life was brief, yet infinitely rich in content, each day having the value of a thousand years.

But their chief business was to follow Him, to learn His secret, to catch His spirit and reproduce it in their own personalities.

But how could they follow Christ? Did not the Master know their inability to do so? Indeed He did, and He told Simon Peter so, when he protested that he would follow to the uttermost, cost what it may, be it prison or death. Said Jesus to him: "Thou *canst not* follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me hereafter." When the test came, these noble-hearted and enthusiastic would-be followers, all of them, forsook Him and fled.

But their failure in following a Master whom they truly loved, so painful and humiliating, prepared them for the reception of that heavenly power, the Holy Spirit, in which alone following Christ—the earth-rejected—the sacrificial Lamb—the self-renouncing Lover of God and man—is possible. Through their utter breakdown they saw their need of *Grace* and were enabled to receive it abundantly.

All through they were in the making. Their futile attempts and the bankruptcy their unaided efforts entailed, were part of the plan designed by divine wisdom. It was a glorious adventure, this life of following Christ. But it brought out crudeness, roughness, ignorance, prejudice—things that attach to unlettered and uncultured men. But as they learned to give the Master who had called them into this new life, the first place, as they continued with Him, in spite of rebukes, rebuffs, and humblings to their self-will and pride, He could "make" them. And though they had continually misunderstood Him, when the Spirit came, they received a new understanding, and the remem-

bered words of their Lord were lit up with new meaning and had a formative effect upon them. They became, as the Master had declared they would be, the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

All men follow something. What a man follows puts its mark upon him, be the object sordid or noble. Christians are those who have separated themselves from all other Masters and Lovers—to follow the “*One Master*,” and all such followers become “*brethren*.” The spell is broken that bound them to the things that once charmed their hearts. They may fail, and often do fail, to interpret Him aright. Crucifixion is a lingering death, and fleshly ambitions have a strange tenacity. But some day the men in the making will be finished products, when “Christ will be admired” in them, and He can take pleasure in the work of His hands.

THE IDEAL SERVANT OF JEHOVAH

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"Behold My Servant."

LET us, as servants of God, contemplate the portrait given in Isaiah xlii. of the ideal Servant. We know but One *fully* answered to this holy pattern. The book of the prophet Isaiah is like a picture-gallery, and there are two rows of portraits. The first gives us various presentations of the Christ in His manifold glories; as the "Babe," the "Disciple," the "Lamb," the "King," and as here, the "Servant." The second is a series answering to the first. They are the "children," the "disciples," the "seed" of the Lamb led to the slaughter, the "princes," the "servants." For there are "brethren" of "the Second Man" who share His glory, and are conformed to His Image. They are the fruit of "the travail of His soul," in whom He finds His satisfaction. They do not merely admire the pictures. They, by His own eternal Spirit, translate the ideal into the actual. They feel that *seeing* is not *believing*. He lives in them and through them, and the Eternal Word becomes flesh again, in the measure in which they hearken and obey that Word.

And now with adoring hearts let us consider our Divine Lord in Servant's form. Let us study His features. He was the Vessel fully at the Father's disposal without a moment's break.

(1) "Behold My servant whom I uphold, Mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth."

Jesus had no earthly backing. No committee or society supported Him. The religious leaders were jealous of Him, and His disciples were of the peasant class of Galilee. Jesus lived a life of poverty. He was born in one man's stable, and buried in another man's tomb. He once had not even a penny. He said, "*Show me a penny.*" There are but few who are willing to follow Him in this.

Jesus lived a life of daily dependence on the Father. Said He, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do, these also doeth the Son likewise." The true sons, the seed of God on earth, have no power, no wisdom, no ability, except as they draw it forth from the Father, in the Father's own time. They are willing to appear foolish and of no account, so that the Spirit of their Father may be the Leader and Worker in them and by them, and that not when they please, but when He pleases. That was the life our Saviour lived on earth, and He over and over again taught His disciples to hate every other. For the Father will not support any other. Only that which He begets and raises up is acceptable to Him. Any ministry which springs from the first birth is rejected like Cain's offering, however beautiful it might appear to the natural eye. The true seed cannot run, pray, worship, preach, or be silent, in their own will. The Divinely-begotten life must also be a Divinely-supported life. It waiteth not for man, nor tarrieth for the sons of men. This was the life of God's pattern Servant. He was the only perfect slave that ever trod this earth. He uninterruptedly did the will of Another. He could say: "I do always the things that please Him." As the will of the Father was His meat, so

He, in doing that will, became the meat-offering. And now He beckons us to follow where He has left the impress of His holy feet.

(2) "I have put My spirit upon Him." From His birth, according to the flesh, our Lord was "that Holy Thing;" for His very humanity was begotten of the Holy Ghost. And that which is born of God cannot sin. During the years of His gradual growth in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man, the indwelling Father was His Teacher, and He taught the wise-hearted Son His "business." "A wise son maketh *a glad father*," and it was the all-consuming passion of this Divine Son to make the loving heart of God as glad as the evil in the world had made it sad. But He had to wait thirty years for the power by which He could go forth to do the Father's works, and destroy the works of the devil, in disease, demon-possession, and death.

Now every true believer has the Holy Spirit *in* him, but can we also add that every such an one has the power of the Spirit resting *upon* him? Thou canst not claim this in thine own will and time. As with the pattern Servant, so with thee, there must be a certain ripeness and development of spiritual faculties before one can be entrusted with this dynamite of God. It might do harm otherwise.

The apostles had this enduement and since their day many here and there in apostate Christendom have been raised up in a measure of the same life and power. But, alas! in most instances it has been very fragmentary and feeble in comparison with that supernatural equipment in which the men of Galilee went about. It was really God's

anointed Servant, now glorified, reproducing Himself in His members on the earth.

Have we a heart to feel our poverty? Or do we say with Laodicea that we are in need of nothing, when all the time we are blind and poor and miserable, and wretched? How few earnest toilers in the Master's cause feel that their work has been mainly the expenditure of nervous energy and the enthusiasm of the soulish part in them!

God has said that He would put His sevenfold Spirit upon a rod. He is on the lookout for the lowly; that is why He looked upon a Gideon, the barley-cake which overthrew the tents of Midian, and why He spoke through the child Samuel. God wants rods that can be bent and are pliable in His hand. All true servants have always been illustrations of "the weakness of God" and "the foolishness of God." Abraham, waiting for the promised seed; Joseph in prison, waiting for the throne of Egypt; Moses, with his rod, to bring Israel out of captivity; David in his cave, waiting for the kingdom; Daniel in the lion's den; Paul glorying in his weakness, so that the power of Christ might spread its tabernacle over him.

God's ideal Servant was the rod out of the stem of Jesse. There was a revival movement in Israel; a ministry of repentance; a weeping people were confessing their sins in the river Jordan. And Jesus identified Himself with this movement, this deep bending in a remnant of the people. And that was the moment when the heavens opened, and the Father's voice declared His joy in Him, and the long expected anointing with the Holy Ghost and with power came. And in this too the ideal Servant is our Pattern.

(3) "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." There was nothing of the noisy agitator about the Lord Jesus. He did not advertise Himself. Like the cherubim, who cover their faces and their bodies with their wings, His was a hidden service. He never wrought a miracle to display His power. He never gratified the curiosity of sensation-mongers. His deepest utterances were spoken to individuals: to Nicodemus at midnight; to the woman of Samaria at a wayside well. We might have reserved them for some important meeting, where we had an opportunity to shine.

There was a wonderful calm in the daily walk of God's ideal Servant. Men never saw Him in a hurry, or excited, or puzzled, or baffled, or out of humor, or off His balance. Jesus permitted no one to "hustle" Him. He was ever recollected as He said, "I have set Jehovah always before Me, because He is at My right hand I shall not be moved."

Quietness is the high-water mark of the power of the Spirit. The spiritual man can afford to be quiet, for He knows God does not require the assistance of the flesh. The Divine Spirit is the gentlest of all beings. His presence in power in a human heart diffuses a calm serenity through all the faculties, even in the midst of the clamorous voices and distractions of a restless world.

God may have spoken to thee "out of the midst of the whirlwind," as He spoke to Job, but there will come a time when, like the man of God on the mount, thou wilt feel "the Lord is not in the whirlwind" any more. He will make Himself known in

“a still, small voice,” and thou wilt cover thy face with a mantle in the presence of His Majesty.

The judgment ministry of the Baptist was necessary as an introduction, but the deepest in God could not be told out then. The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. John was the porter, but Jesus the Shepherd to whom he opened, and then disappeared. By Him the sheep were led into the pastures of eternal life, and to drink of the still waters which flow out of the depths of God.

The presence of Christ is still discovered in this way, for there is a perfect correspondence between His outward and His inward manifestations. “The kingdom of God” (*i. e.*, His reign in the heart) “cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, Lo, there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Become still, and thou wilt discover how near is the Guide, the Teacher, the Comforter, the Friend thou needest. Thou wilt recognize Him in that still, small voice—it may be as a gentle rebuke—in thy heart.

As we come more and more under the influence of this gentle teacher, the fussiness will go out of our lives; we shall come to love stillness and retirement and we shall find rest unto our souls.

(4) “A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.” The ideal Servant of Jehovah was merciful and compassionate in His dealings with sinners. The spiritual man will be very tender towards the least and lowliest appearance of that which is of God in any human life. He will not judge readily. He will hope against hope in the most trying cases of wrong-doing. He feels he cannot give up anyone.

He does not look upon appearances merely. He weighs against the sad fall, the long struggle and agony of temptation that preceded it. He always appeals to the good in others. The apostle could see Christ, the Hope of glory, in the young converts at Colosse who were so deficient in their Christian experience. He had unshaken confidence in God touching the carnal Corinthians, that in the day of Christ they would be presented "blameless." In Jesus all this came out perfectly. No one had such a hatred of sin, yet no one such tenderness with sinners. He is God manifest in the flesh. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. And God is Love. The heart of God yearns over the bruised and broken children of sin and sorrow, and in Christ Jesus would become bruised and broken bread for bruised and broken sinners to feed upon. O how often we have given our God a false character by our harshness and cold, legal attitude towards others! With what rough and awkward hands we have touched the sores of our brethren and sisters wounded by Satan!

How skilfully did God's Pattern Servant restore Simon Peter! A silent look was enough. He never exposes us to public gaze. He never revealed the name of the woman of Luke vii., or the sinner of Sychar in John iv. A newspaper would give all the defiling details, so that the persons involved could not lift up their heads again in decent society. We need to go to school with our Master, to learn mercifulness from His perfect example. He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. Every human life was to Him an opened book. He knew the secret history of

every soul, and had a key to open every private drawer. And who can tell what that must have been to Him, the Holy, Holy, Holy One! But never once did He make a public pronouncement as to anyone's state. Pharisees and scribes, *as a class*, might be shown to be deceivers of the people, but the *individual* Pharisee, whom the Father brought across His path, met with nothing but patience, tenderness, and mercy from Him Who came to minister to *all*, and to give His life a ransom for *every* man.

(5) "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment on the earth."

Hope is an essential item in the armor of God with which we have to stand against the hosts of darkness. We are on the winning side. The ideal Servant was never discouraged. Bethsaida and Chorazin might refuse His testimonials, but He knew His record was on high, and His work with His God. He already saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. With the Cross before Him He could give thanks, and declare that the Father had committed *all things* into His hands. And He knew that *all* that the Father gave to Him would come to Him in due time. King Jehoshaphat sang on the way to victory in the valley of Berachah, but Jesus sang on the way to Gethsemane and Calvary, to what looked like disaster and defeat.

Nineteen centuries has He been waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool; for a spotless and glorious bride to be presented to Him; for Israel to kiss the Son; for the uttermost parts of the earth to be made His inheritance. And if He has to wait another nineteen centuries, He will not fail, nor be discouraged. He will yet stand at the

head of a ransomed and renovated universe, and recover all for God in everlasting bliss. This is His goal, and He will reach it, whatever the apparent delay.

The same is true of His work in our lives. For every human being is a microcosm—a little universe in himself; and God has a special plan for everyone. O believe only that He is “the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End!” He worketh in thee both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He created a world out of nothing, and brought beauty out of chaos. He can bring holiness and loveliness out of a life thrown into confusion by sin. He brings out the Divine likeness where we see only Satan’s caricatures. All things work together for good to them that love God, that they might be conformed to the image of His Son. The Divine alchemist can turn everything into blessing, however mysterious and perplexing. It has been said by another: “As ‘the Last,’ He will have the last word concerning us—not the enemy, not men, not even we, but He alone. Cain, the fratricide, thought he had uttered the last word about himself when he cried out: ‘My sin is greater than that it can be forgiven.’ Hast thou spoken the last word about thyself? Have men, has the enemy? None of you have the right to do so—the right belongs to Him only—‘the Last’.”

Let Him, the Divine Potter, take the marred vessel of thy life into His skilful hands again, and He will transform it into a thing of beauty, into a joy forever. Take heart again, disappointed one; look up, Naomi, reaping the bitter fruit of past sins; the unseen and discouraged Worker has not yet spoken His last word. There is still hope. He

has not yet dropped His work. He does not despair of success. "He faileth not." Thou hast not surprised Him by thy frequent lapses. He knew "thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." But having loved thee, His own, He will love thee *"unto the end."*

O let us, as His fellow-workers, learn from Him to love the unlovely, to carry the weak, to bear with the dull, to be patient with the obstinate, to smile on the unthankful, to overcome evil with good! Then shall we love our fellow-men into love, into holiness, into God.

(6) "I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a Covenant of the people, for a Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

This is the program of the anointed Servant. He is to bring the slaves of sin and Satan into the kingdom of God. He is not a mere preacher or lecturer. He has been endued with delivering power. The eternal Word was clothed in Servant's form, and was in that lowly guise manifested as the Divine Son, that He might destroy the works of the devil. And now the world is anxiously waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, who go onwards on the same lines as the Son in life and testimony, and the strong man must yield up his stolen goods to them as he did to Him.

It was "by the Spirit of holiness" that Jesus was "declared the Son of God with power"—the same Spirit who afterwards raised Him from the dead up to the right hand of God. "As many as are led

by the Spirit of God *they are the sons of God*"; and by that same Spirit will they be caught up to God and His throne.

When the First-born received the open certificate to His Divine Sonship, at once the prince of this world challenged His title. "*If Thou be the Son of God.*" His "brethren," who have the spirit of Sonship, must also expect to go through the furnace of temptation. But they stand through His victory on conquered ground. When they have demonstrated that they are of the same order with Him who overcame in the wilderness, in the garden, and on the cross, will Satan and the spirits of the world of darkness give way before these sons of light.

The early Christians did behave themselves in some measure as the fellows of the Conqueror of Satan. They continued His victorious march. But alas! thick darkness has since then overspread Christendom; the ancient glory has departed!

O that the visible and invisible world might once more be compelled to recognize that Christ has a true succession on the earth!

The true servant is to be a deliverer of others. But this will entail suffering. As the ideal Servant became the sacrificial Lamb, so the fellow-servants must become living sacrifices.

Abraham was the deliverer of his nephew Lot out of captivity, but he had to risk his life to do it. Esther, by her intercession, saved a whole nation from extinction, but she was ready to perish in the attempt to stand in the breach for her people. All true service for others is vicarious. Has there ever been anything accomplished in the

kingdom of God that might rightly be called *fruit for eternity*, that has not its roots in sacrifice? "Without shedding of blood is no remission," no atonement, no life and peace. Quite true. But we may go further—*no true ministry to any soul*. It is a costly thing to desire to be a deliverer of others. Jesus found it so. And so will you. It is only as death works in the servant that life can flow from him to others. You cannot be "light" in the midst of darkness, unless you are willing to be consumed in the shining. You cannot be "salt" in the midst of corruption unless you are willing to disappear. You cannot be "wine" to make "glad the heart of God and man," unless you are willing to be crushed.

(7) "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. . . . Who is blind, but My Servant? or deaf, as My Messenger, that I sent? Who is blind as He that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's Servant?"

The answer to these questions is Christ, the ideal Servant, and those who work with Him.

The perplexing problem of Divine guidance is solved for all who are willing to become both "blind" and "deaf". These are the conditions, and Jesus fulfilled them both. People make the mistake of looking at the abnormal and sensational as evidences of Divine guidance. Rather trace out the golden clue of the guiding hand of God in thy life in the apparently trivial and ordinary; in that which *seems* to come of itself, "without hands." How often we read in the holy Scriptures, "And it came to pass!" With that which has been the

result of human engineering and wire-pulling God has, as a rule, very little to do, except to permit it in judgment, as a rod to chastise our self-will and haste.

Our holy Master did not watch agreeable circumstances, but the hand of the Father. He did not listen to the approving voices of friends; the direction of the indwelling Father was His only guidance. If *human need* had been a sufficient claim upon His services, would He not have rushed at once to the dying bed of His friend Lazarus? But the Servant belongs first to His Master, and then to those to whom His Master sends Him. Jesus was One whom the Father had sanctified and sealed for Himself, and thus sent into the world.

Such devotedness and surrender on the part of the servant is not always understood by others. The path of the guided Servant has always been a lonely one. Jesus was intensely lonely; and His manner and methods were "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," even to His disciples. When responding to the entreaties of Jairus to lay His hand on his dying child, on the way to the house a fresh claim on His services was made by the woman who touched the hem of His garment. That caused a considerable delay. If the ideal Servant had not steadfastly watched the Father's will and pleasure, He would have torn Himself away from the woman and hurried to the dying child. But He was deaf to all mere human considerations, and He could afford to be misunderstood in doing the Father's will. He saw and felt the agony in the heart of Jairus, and yet allowed the child to die during the

delay on the road. But the Father had the care of His reputation, and the sequel vindicated every step.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His works in vain;
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

The holy Servant Jesus kept step with the Father, and thus reached the goal—the Cross. He might have gone into heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the very Shekinah descended and saluted Him; but the guiding voice led Him onwards to the final baptism and the cup. The Lord God had opened His ear, and He was not rebellious, neither turned away back. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

A dear, departed friend wrote as follows: “We find but few appearances in the Scriptures of men who kept step with God without a break. Only two out of the 600,000 who had come out of Egypt kept step with God right into Canaan (Num. xxvi: 65). And how often have even we, who are as yet allowed to call ourselves His captives, refused to recognize His pace. Sometimes we preferred to run ahead, and sometimes to lag behind. We were glad to go on with Him till we saw the Cross and the humiliation, and then we quickly saved our lives and took the government into our hands again! How often and how flagrantly we have acted contrary to His Spirit and His ways. We can only marvel at His patience that He has not left us behind, but has waited for us till we came back

from our self-chosen paths to Himself. But let us today finish with this zig-zag. Let us break with our own lives, as Jesus did on the Cross with His (Rom. vi: 6). We want to belong to the few who keep step with Him in His self-renunciation, in His readiness for sacrifice, in His rejection. Thousands accompanied Him when He entered Jerusalem as King, but only a few when He went out by another gate, bearing His Cross, reckoned amongst the transgressors. The names of those who kept step with Jesus to the Cross have been counted up (John xix: 25, 26). Of the 5,000 whom He had taught and fed, there was *only one*, and of the women *but few*. Paul kept step with his Lord all the way, even to the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be made conformable unto His death.

“It is doubly important to keep step with Jesus in our day, not only because of the many temptations, not only because we can already hear, in the signs of the times, the footfall of the Coming One, *but also because Christianity demands a greater devotedness today than it did twenty years ago*. For as Christianity in the beginning could only be introduced by means of martyrdom, so only by martyrdom can it be maintained at the end.”

Holy Father, make us, Thy poor servants, like Thy Pattern Servant, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we stand alone, if need be, as He stood alone, having Thee as our only support. Anoint us more with the same Spirit that rested upon Him without measure. Make us quiet as He was quiet; merciful and tender as He was merciful and ten-

der; hopeful and undiscouraged in the darkest hour. May we, too, be deliverers of others, binding up broken hearts, and healing such as are oppressed of the devil. And, above all, let Thy Spirit be the unfettered Guide of our lives, after the pattern of *that* life, constraining us to follow His holy steps. Amen.

THE FOURFOLD ARGUMENT FOR THE
FAITH OF JESUS, THE MESSIAH

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THE thoughtful Jew of our day is obliged to settle, one way or the other, a grave problem. Is the Christian faith, which claims to be the true inwardness and goal of the religion of the Old Testament, fact or fiction, miracle or myth?

Now to those of us to whom the question has been answered in the affirmative, who believe that Christianity is the very truth itself, and not a humanly imagined and manipulated religious system, there appear to be thousands of reasons for its validity. But to the writer it seems evident that these many proofs might conveniently be grouped under four heads. And it is his present aim so to set them forth.

I. THE ARGUMENT FROM PROPHECY

Time was when the argument from Prophecy was stressed more freely than it is in our day. It has certainly fallen somewhat into disuse. This is probably due to the prevailing uncertainty respecting the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. When the apostle Paul went among Bible-honoring Jews he used this method of approach. We read in Acts xvii: "Paul, as his manner was . . . reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that the Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is the Christ," (i. e. Messiah).

It would be well to revive this line of testimony. There is evidence of design and purpose in the history of ancient Israel, culminating in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth as the heaven-sent and accredited Messiah. The discovery that the Old Testament is the record of a step by step revelation, gradually reaching its New Testament goal, confirms our faith that Christianity is built upon the rock.

Now the Messianic Hope constitutes the *raison d'être* of Israel. In order that He might be given to the world, that nation was raised up, taught and disciplined. It is the fact of the Messiah that entitles Israel to be called a chosen people. Every other feature that marks this mysterious nation is subsidiary to this. This is her greatest glory that she has become the national mother of such an one as Jesus, whom believers call Savior and Lord. The call of Abram out of the land of his nativity and away from his family to live as a stranger in the land of promise, had for its object the founding of a family that might in time become a new nation, in the midst of which God might have a people which walked in the spirit of Abram's faith-life, and which could become the matrix in which one Man, *par excellence*, could be formed. That Man is the Messiah. From the beginning God had Him in mind.

No other nation could have produced Him. There was a profound reason why the Incarnation, the greatest event in the history of our planet, should take place among the Jewish people. Insignificant as that people was in comparison with the mighty nations of antiquity, such as Egypt, Babylon, Rome, whose empires overshadowed the

earth, there was that among the despised Hebrews which eclipsed them. For they alone had the true knowledge of that God whom Jesus came to reveal. They alone had a true estimate of the individual man whom Jesus came to redeem and regenerate. They alone had a sense of the supremacy of righteousness which Jesus came to live out and impart. They alone had a religious interpretation of history to be crowned by a redeeming act of God in the person of the Messiah.

Unless we see the Messiah in the Old Testament, it is difficult to find one's way through it. It becomes then only a confused collection of Jewish folk lore and traditions, to which may be added some historical data. But "*salvation is of the Jews,*" even as "*salvation is of the Lord.*" It is heaven-provided, but prepared for on earth. The Old Testament is the history of that preparation.

There is no story more interesting than that of Christ in the Old Testament. It is the literature respecting His pre-incarnate life. There were prophetic *foretellings* of Him. There were also typical *foreshadowings* of Him. And besides there were, in His manifestations, *foretastes* of Him all through the history of the chosen people from Abraham downward.

The whole Old Testament may be spoken of as the record of the process *how God made one Man*, Jesus on His human side is the product of the Old Testament. His birth made Him a member of a godly Jewish family in whose home the Scriptures were honored. He was brought up in the atmosphere of Jewish piety. But for the background furnished in the ancient Scriptures of Israel, His life is unthinkable. He is the fairest flower that

grew on the tree God planted in that nation, which had its roots in the promises made to the patriarchs. All that God meant to set forth in Israel came into blossom and fruitage in Him.

We cannot within the limits of this chapter give an exhaustive exegesis of Messianic Prophecy. But we might draw attention to one phenomenon. The Messianic hope was wrapt up in a movement, extending over many centuries and expanding continuously. It was not the brilliant idea of a few gifted dreamers. It was a living organism, beginning, as all life does, from a small germ, and unfolding itself from age to age. There is nothing comparable to this in history outside of Israel. In that nation history became the story of redemption and an ever louder cry for the coming of the Redeemer.

The very story of creation is colored by the Messianic hope. For the crown of creation is a god-like man to whom dominion is given over nature. Then, in the story of the Fall, we see how he lost that place, and perpetual conflict with the powers of darkness follows. But the conflict will be terminated in the victory of the Woman's mysterious Seed, in whom mankind will regain its lost Kingdom.

It was in the family of Abraham that this primeval hope was preserved alive, that the war between the Redeemer and seducer would end in the triumph of good over evil. That His heel should be bruised refers clearly to His sufferings. That He should bruise the serpent's head refers to His triumph by means of His cross.

The expectation of that Kingdom gave to the Jewish people that forward look which sustained

them in the midst of their unexampled sufferings. It never quite died out of their hearts. As time went on it was more and more purged of merely nationalistic ambitions and spiritualized, until in the sublime figure of the Ebed-Yahveh of Isaiah xlii-liii it reached its highest and noblest concept. Israel was to have its national life headed up in a Personality whose unselfish and sacrificial ministry would become the salvation of God to the ends of the earth.

We have clear statements what the marks of the true Messiah were to be, whereby the godly in Israel were to recognize Him when He came. Take for instance the Royal Babe with the five names in Isaiah ix: "Wonderful," His supernatural origin. "Counsellor," His supernatural wisdom. "Mighty God," His supernatural strength. "Eternal Father," His supernatural guardianship of His people. "Prince of Peace," His supernatural reign. Look also at the equally striking passage in Zech. ix, 9: His coming to Jerusalem as the King with the four attributes. (1) Just (or righteous, Heb. *Tsaddik*). (2) Having salvation (Heb. *Noshā*), i. e. divinely saved from death to be Saviour of others. (3) Lowly (Heb. *Ani*, i. e. poor, afflicted). (4) Riding upon the peaceable ass, not upon a war horse, as military Messiah. These two passages are but samples of scores of others equally striking.

The latter day prophets, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, clearly expected the Messianic hope to find the beginning of its fulfillment during the life-time of the second temple. Among their last prophetic utterances is the prediction of Mal. iii, 1-3: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he

shall prepare the way before Me." This refers to the work of John the Baptist. "And the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger (i. e. Angel) of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

We believe the God of Israel did not raise false hopes in the hearts of His people. Before the destruction of that Temple which Malachi had seen built, He came who was that Temple's "Lord," as the aged Simeon called Him: "The Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Thy people Israel." Prophecy lit up the way of His appearing and testifies to Him.

II. THE ARGUMENT FROM HISTORY

If prophecy is a finger pointing forward to Christ, history since His appearing has been a finger pointing backward. The last nineteen centuries have been profoundly affected by Him. They are unthinkable except as we allow for His influence. He is the key to their mysterious development. It is true that this is still the age of His rejection; "this present evil age," the apostle Paul calls it. But to those who have eyes to see, there are tokens everywhere that "the darkness is passing and the True Light (i. e. Christ) now shineth." Cosmically, as well as in the inner world of our individual lives, "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness overcometh it not." You cannot put the clock back and put the world where it was before the beginning of the Christian era. His advent marks the watershed of history.

Even atheists, and Jews refusing His claims, have to be unwitting witnesses to His supremacy.

Every time they date a letter they have to give the date since the Herald Angels announced His birth in Bethlehem. This is indeed Anno Domini. He who said at the end of His earthly course, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," now says from the throne of the universe: "I must reign till I have put all enemies under my feet."

When standing at the bar of the Jewish council and challenged by the High Priest to declare whether He was indeed "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed," He made this momentous announcement: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter, (i. e. from now on) shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Those were tremendous claims, but history has justified them and will do so more and more. He was then at His lowest fortunes and apparently at the mercy of His enemies. But His lowest humiliation would be the starting point of His exaltation. He would sit at the right hand of power, and His enemies would become aware of it by His coming in the clouds of heaven.

The Christian era is nothing less than that, the witness to the exaltation of God's rejected Christ. And all down the Christian centuries He has been coming, as it were, in the clouds of heaven; the iron rod in His pierced hand, wherewith He has broken in pieces as a potter's vessel every system, religious or political, that has opposed the coming of His Kingdom. Witness the destruction of Jerusalem and the demolition of pagan Rome. The great upheavals and overturnings among the nations, the shaking of empires and the overthrow of dynasties, the sweeping away of age-long abomina-

tions, such as the gladiatorial games, polygamy, slavery, etc., were the outward signs of His spiritual *Parousia*. And soon He will come in manifested power and glory, in the Epiphany of His *Parousia* (lit. the out-shining of His Presence). "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen!" The destruction of Jerusalem, the ruin of Jewish ritual and nationality in A. D. 70; the break up of the Roman empire by the barbarians; the mighty Reformation which emancipated millions from the domination of papal Rome; the French Revolution which was the end of feudalism; the world war of 1914-1918; are so many premonitory tokens of the coming crisis that will usher in the glorious reign of the Son of Man. Believe me, He is no mere looker-on from a distance. We are living in a world in the midst of which He is intensely active, in goodness as well as in judgment. His Spirit is the inspiration and driving force of every movement that makes for righteousness in human relations, national and international. If so much could have been accomplished while Satan is still openly active, what will He not be able to do for this poor, troubled world when he is chained to the bottomless pit! But though the armies of the kings of the earth are preparing to make "war with the Lamb," He whose name is King of kings and Lord of lords, rides on victoriously down the centuries of time, on the white horse, His garment dipped in blood, on His once thorn-pierced brow many diadems, and the white-robed armies of His heavenly saints follow in His train. For in righteousness He does judge

and make war upon iniquity in high and low places, in social, business and ecclesiastical institutions. And out of His mouth proceedeth a sharp, two-edged sword, which is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal but spiritual. Not by force but by persuasion He establishes His rights. This is the true key to history. The One sitting at God's right hand reigns in the midst of His enemies, waiting for the glorious consummation when they shall become His foot-stool.

The argument from history is a powerful proof for the fact of Christ. We know he was an historical fact, because He has been and still is a mighty factor in the affairs of men. He has been building, and is still building up, in His indestructible church, a visible monument to His name. In perennial youthfulness this church has been renewing her vigor from generation to generation. She is the city of God; and though the earth be shaken and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea, she shall outlive and outlast all changes. The church survived the passing of the Roman empire and set herself to tame the northern barbarians that had broken it up. She lived on in spite of the corruptions, ignorance and superstitions of the dark ages, and put on new glory during the renaissance period. She arose thrilling with new evangelical fervor after the onset of the humanism, atheism and deism of the 18th century. She will have renewed her strength when our modern scientific agnosticism shall have been forgotten.

We have to account for the genius of Christianity. It has suffered many disasters. It has often been betrayed, even by its professed friends. It has again and again seemed to come to its demise. But every such disaster has been followed by a revival; and each revival has put the church on a higher plane. Wherein lies this power of recuperation?

Again, the divine ideas enshrined in Christianity have been progressively discovered and understood during the last nineteen centuries. Where did this power for self-development come from?

Finally, we see in the church a marvellous power of adaptation. The cause of Christ has nothing to fear from the advancing knowledge of the centuries, from science or philosophy. It has in the past absorbed and utilized every fresh ray of light. At the end Christ will unite all things in Himself, both the things of heaven and of earth.

As Calvin wrote in reference to Micah iv, 6:

“Although the church is at the present time hardly to be distinguished from a dead, or at least a sick man, there is no reason to despair, for the Lord raiseth up His own suddenly, as He waked the dead from the grave. This we must clearly remember, lest, when the church fails to shine forth, we conclude too quickly that her light has died away. But the church in the world is so preserved, that *she riseth suddenly* from the dead. Her very preservation through the days is due to a succession of such miracles. Let us cling to the remembrance that she is not without her resurrection, or rather, not without her many resurrections.”

III. THE ARGUMENT FROM PERSONALITY

The third argument is the Personality of Jesus the Messiah Himself. As the sun shines by its own light, so, He is His own evidence. He needs no outside testimony. Now the character of Christ as depicted in the Gospels is so unique that it is inconceivable that any literary genius could have invented it. If the story of the Gospels belongs to the realm of fiction literature, then we have to account somehow for this literary miracle. The personality that stands out from its pages challenges us. What a mighty impression it produces still after nineteen centuries! What a combination of qualities we find here not usually seen side by side in one character and in perfect harmony! He constantly obtrudes Himself before the eye as the object of faith and devotion. Yet none more lowly and unassuming! What majesty combined with meekness! What lion-courage united with lamb-like submission! What self-assertion, unbecoming to a mere man, with depths of self-renunciation none of His followers has dared to descend into! What purity before which sinners under the cloak of religiousness wince, with tender pity to outcasts and penitents. Knowing that all things had been committed into His hands, yet stooping to wash His disciples' feet! Hanging on a felon's cross, yet opening Paradise to a fellow sufferer! In His busy public life, never in a hurry, never baffled, never thrown off His balance; Master of every situation; never needing to retrace His steps or retract His words! What wisdom, what poetry, what directness, what crystal purity, yet what simplicity, in His utterances! Never man lived like this Man; loved as He loved; spake as He spake!

No one before or since suffered and was silent under wrong as He did! It is a portrait from life and not the creation of the brain of literary artists that we meet with here.

The marvellous thing about the pen-portrait of Jesus in the evangelists is the universality of the person presented.

*"That one Face,
Far from vanish, rather grows,
And decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe, that feels and knows."*

There is nothing provincial, local, or temporary about Christ. He belongs to the twentieth century, as much as to the first. To Europe and America, as much as to Asia. To male and female, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. Of no great character in history can the same be predicated. Neither Plato or Shakespeare or Goethe fit into every age, suit every state and condition, meet every temperament, or give the impression of being every man's friend and companion, like Jesus, and they were in many ways universal in their outlook. But the first remains a classical Greek; the second, an Elizabethan Englishman; the third, a German of the Napoleonic era. But who would confine Jesus to the limitations of a Palestinian Jew of the Herodian period? He transcends both time and space. He cannot be walled in by any creed, enshrined in the sarcophagus of dogmas, or monopolized by any ecclesiastical institution. He is bigger than our definitions, and the noblest poetry, music or art, feel that they cannot do justice to Him. His story is never told, and every age finds some new, hitherto undiscovered meaning in Him. The

child lisps its first prayers in His name. The youth is inspired by the example of His heroism. The mature man turns to Him for wisdom, guidance and strength. The aged pilgrim is glad for the Man of Galilee to carry him over life's last, long mile.

Another phenomenon makes the portrait drawn in the Gospel a unique fact of literary art. It has the power of impressing itself upon the beholder and reflecting its beauty in his face. "We all with unveiled face, beholding (or reflecting) as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." It is a living picture that strangely affects the one who comes into sympathetic relations with it. We turn our tear-dimmed eyes to it and our sin-soiled faces, and we find comfort and healing. We bare our bosom to its search light and submit our most intimate thoughts to its scrutiny. And, as we sit before that Face, we become quiet again and we see light where before was confusion. As we habitually look upon it, we unconsciously absorb its features. Hard faces become soft and gentle. Impression produces its own expression. There is such a thing as a Christian face. It is the reflection of the Face of Christ.

The problems of the twentieth century are many and complex. The world is passing through a period of jazz. People are fussy, nervous, perplexed, loud, hunting for new thrills continually. The nations are like the troubled sea that cannot be quiet. Christendom burns incense to the idols of size, speed and noise. We have lost the ancient peace.

But wherever men shut their ears to the loud calls of false guides, they will hear the same Voice

that once called the weary in far off Galilee: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

That Voice has lost none of its sweetness or power. Christ Jesus is neither a spent force or an exhausted fountain. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

IV. THE ARGUMENT FROM EXPERIENCE

The fourth argument for the truth of Christ is the personal experience of the one who welcomes it into his heart and practices it in his life. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." His inward experience tallies with the message he has accepted.

The fact that Jesus became the Master and Moulder of the men whom He influenced stands out as a part of His greatest ministry. It was prophesied of the Messianic age that "instead of the thorn should come up the fir tree; instead of the briar, the myrtle. This shall be unto the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." The transformation of lives from sin to holiness, from selfishness to unselfishness, is a miraculous change in the moral and spiritual realm and calls for the exercise of power greater than the miracles recorded in the Gospels as having taken place on the plane of the material. And this marvelous changing of men was predicted to be the standing evidence of the Messiah.

Many of the sign-gifts that marked the activities of the early church have ceased. Perhaps they are no longer required. But this sign is "everlasting." It has not been cut off. All down the centuries men have been found who witness to its permanence. It is the great outstanding evidence of the Truth of the Christian revelation. Christ produces the Christian life and character.

Christian experience is a powerful argument for the fact of Christ because all experience is the effect of a cause, and presupposes an objective reality which produces it. Experience of any kind never comes of itself. It has its roots in reality. You cannot experience a smile without a smiling face. You cannot experience sweetness without the taste of that which is sweet. You cannot experience love without a heart that loves you. In the same way it is faith in Christ that brings forth Christian experience. Christianity is not mere emotion or mystical ecstasy. It has an historical background. It has a divine revelation to legitimize its claims. And the central figure of the history, as the theme of pivotal significance in the revelation, is the Person and work of the Christ of God.

When Jesus was engaged in His public ministry there were two lines of service which went side by side—one public, and the other private. The public ministry of healing and teaching created a great sensation, but it ended in the tragedy of the cross. The hidden ministry of training the men of Galilee for their life-work prepared them for the crowning blessing bestowed on the day of Pentecost. It was a marked success. The impact of His personality

upon these characters had left a permanent work. He so impressed Himself upon them that they could be trusted to go forth and express Him. The Jewish council took knowledge of Peter and John that "they had been with Jesus;" for though they perceived that "they were unlearned and ignorant men," they had a bearing and style that suggested their Master. They had absorbed the spirit of Jesus and they were able to represent Him worthily before the leaders of their people.

Jesus is indeed the potter of human lives. He transformed a Simon Barjonah into a Peter, a man of rock; a Boanerges into a disciple of love; a persecutor Saul into Paul, the chosen vessel to carry Christ about. Under the influence of Christ lambs become as bold as lions, and lions as meek as lambs. And His Presence is with us still to change and transform human lives.

The men who crept to David in the hold of Adullam were a sorry crew. They were the debtors, the distressed, and the derelicts of society. But they came under the personal influence of God's anointed. The company of David transformed them. They became "mighty men" whose deeds of heroism are inscribed on God's roll of fame.

So does the greater than David still take up the broken and bruised among the children of men and, attaching them to His Person by bonds stronger than steel, impart to them something of Himself; and, by the alchemy of His Spirit, make them into other men. Of no one else in history can this be said. And as long as this evidence is forthcoming, the Christian faith will silence all

its opponents. As of old: "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . and beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it."

Our Master bids us test the prophets who come to us not by their words but by their fruits. We know what "the fruit of the Spirit," the gift of Christ to His own, is. It is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (or self-control). When the world of the Roman empire saw these traits exhibited by men who, before they had become Christ-conquered men, had lived in nameless and shameless vices, in spite of the highest culture that age could afford, it marvelled. Christ is the creator of a new type of man; the new-creation man, the "man in Christ," who is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male or female, but a heavenly man, waiting for the translation. These men have their names written in the book of the life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. They continue Christ's heavenly life on earth—the lamb life of sacrificial love. They love not their natural life, but crucify it with its affections and lusts. For them to live is Christ and to die is gain.

We have now presented the four-fold argument. What remains but to exhort the reader to verify the truth for himself? The order is ever: "O taste and see that the Lord is good." We must have courage to taste before we can get the light of certainty. Faith must needs be an experiment before it blossoms into an experience. When Philip invited Nathaniel, the stay at home critic, to the newly discovered Messiah, he answered:

“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip gave the only answer possible under the circumstances: “Come and thou shalt see.” Many refuse to come until they have all their intellectual difficulties cleared up. But let the man hungering for God, for reality, for purity and peace, come first. Let him come just as he is and where he is. God “limiteth a certain day, saying . . . today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” There is no promise for tomorrow. Let the prodigal come straight from the swine troughs and in his rags. Let the man “full of leprosy” come for the healing touch of Jesus. Let the palsied obey the word of power to take up his bed and walk. Let the withered right hand be stretched out in faith, for Jesus commands it. “Zacchaeus made haste and came down to receive Jesus into his house.” All these made the venture of faith, and the experience, the sight, the assurance, came as a consequence. For such is the language of the Hebrew mystic: “With Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we shall see light.”