

# The Cure of Souls

Or, Christ's Treatment Of the Individual

By William H. Milton

Whittaker, 1908

[Spelling selectively modernized.]

## Preface

The line of thought in these lectures is a striking and faithful development of the subject as expressed in the title of the book. It is the work of a pastor and preacher, whose ministry has been blessed with exceptional success in a congregation and community representing in an unusual degree, varieties of mind and character. It is a contribution to practical pastoral theology which, I am sure, will be suggestive and helpful to thoughtful and earnest ministers of the Gospel throughout the Church. The correlation of the preacher and the pastor, the dealing with souls in the mass and the guidance of and sympathy with souls as individuals is surely an ideal of the work of a minister of Christ. A pastor finds human nature in realms of thought and feeling and varied experience of life where no books could lead him, or kindle his spiritual imagination. He is dealing then with reality. The application of the Christian Gospel to the inner life of the soul is the secret of his power and the spring of his fervor. The example of Christ is his ideal and his authority. I am sure that the readers of this book will find inspiration and suggestive thought in its pages.

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## I. Prologue – The Great Physician

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them. Matt. 4:23–24.

The foregoing may be taken as an epitome of the sort and variety of our Lord’s works of mercy during the three years of His public ministry on earth. “Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” is put first in the order of His works, because in point of importance His mission to the spiritual nature of man stands first; but “healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” had its place in His ministry also, and often came first in the order of His appeal to men, because He recognized the fact that the easiest way to the hearts and consciences of men is through the door of their bodily needs and sufferings. And too, I think, because He ministered to the whole man, and to have made His appeal to the spiritual side of human nature to the utter disregard of its mental and physical side, would have been to bring a one-sided gospel to those who are always conscious of their physical needs,

while many of them are only imperfectly aware that their souls have any needs at all; or that oftener than otherwise their bodily sufferings are the direct result of the disorganization or derangement of their spiritual relationships and obligations. As Dawson in his recent "Life of Christ" says, "Christ's mission was spiritual. Its supreme aim was not to save the bodies of men but their souls. But man, being what he is, is far more concerned about his body than his soul. Defective virtue is to him scarcely a matter of acute regret, but defective physical health is to him a cause of pain, of dismay, and of humiliation. Christ was perfectly aware of this characteristic of human nature, and grieved over it. Christ wished to be believed for His word's sake; it was only when He found how impossible it was for average humanity to rise to this ideal height that He took lower ground, and adjured men if they could not believe Him for His word's sake at least to believe Him for His work's sake."

That is why, I think, His works of direct bodily healing fell more and more into the background and became fewer the nearer His ministry drew to its close. That is why, as the power and force of the truth which He taught received fuller appreciation and recognition, He became less and less willing to perform His miracles of healing, and, when the appeal for help was too insistent to be refused, sought the concealment of the miracle from those whom He would feign have won by the power of His truth. His ministry to the body was but a means to the end of reaching men's souls. He sympathized with them in their bodily needs, He recognized the realness of their physical needs; but it was the soul of man to which He came with His supreme message; it was by healing their spiritual maladies that He sought most effectively to cast out their sicknesses and diseases. The order of His program seems to teach us that physical defects and suffering have their cause generally in spiritual disorder, and that the surest way to heal the body is to redeem the soul. Certainly that is true of the sufferings of the race; and, I believe, but little less true to the experience of the individual.

That the impression made upon the minds of the disciples was that the ministry of Jesus was primarily concerned with the spiritual, even in His relief of mental and physical ills, seems to be indicated by the order observed by the Evangelist in the account just given of His ministry of healing – "they brought to Him those which were possessed with *devils*, and those which were *lunatic*, and those that had the *palsy*." Spiritual disorders, mental, physical – spiritual before mental, mental before physical healing –

and who shall say that the first was not in order to the last? Who shall say that Christ did not address Himself to the casting out of “unclean devils” of lust and covetousness in order to restore the weakened or impaired faculties of the mind, or to cure or alleviate the diseased functions of the body? Who shall say that the average diseased mind or nervous system is due solely to physical causes, and not the result of some secret spiritual ailment or trouble? Who is not certain that in numberless cases, if such sin or trouble were removed, if the person so afflicted would quit the vicious habit or seek the assurance of pardon and forgiveness, of peace and an undisturbed conscience, the mental or physical ailment would disappear also? Who of you has not experienced the power of faith and spiritual communion to help and restore you in your hour of mental suffering and bodily sickness? If you have not, it would seem to be evident that you are not using your religion as Christ intended it should be used.

Says Dr. Hyslop, an eminent English specialist, to a congress of his medical brethren, “As an alienist, and one whose life has been concerned with the sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all the hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depression of spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a distressed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer.” And Dr. William James, in his exhaustive treatment of the subject of “The Varieties of Religious Experience,” sums up his conclusions from the mass of evidence that he accumulated, by saying, “Summing up in the broadest possible way the characteristics of the religious life, as we have found them, it includes the following beliefs: – 1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance; 2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end; 3. That prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof – be that spirit ‘God’ or ‘law’ – is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces spiritual effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.”

Such utterances, based as they are upon lifelong experience and accurate study, by two eminent authorities in the realms of physiological and psychological research, coming from those who must be as free as any writers on the subject could imaginably be from religious bias or prejudice, are worthy of our best consideration, and entitled to the highest authority. And the inference is not far to seek, that while medicine and surgery will

always have their legitimate places in ministering to our bodily ailments and mental disorders, and while men will always need a physician of the body and mind, what they need also, and perhaps oftener, is a physician of the soul, one who can heal their spiritual diseases, and by the forgiveness and eradication of their sins, either cure their other ailments or give them strength and grace to take their afflictions patiently, deriving from them blessing instead of bane, and through them “growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Christ was such a Physician, and His religion is the means which He has left us for healing our spiritual diseases, and through it at least helping us to live clean, healthy, righteous and triumphant lives. That is the supreme object of our religion – the forgiveness of our sins; and through the forgiveness of sin, the cure of souls – the removal or lightening of many another of our burdens, mental and physical. That was the understanding of its scope and function, which those who came immediately after Christ seem to have had, as illustrated by these words from the epistle of His Apostle James: “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the Church; and let them pray for him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”

I pause here to note the difference between the theory and methods of the program of Jesus, and that of certain modern systems of mental healing, and especially of so-called Christian Science. Without disputing for a moment the efficacy of Christian Science in dealing with many cases of imaginary illness, which however imaginary are often as ruinous and debilitating in their action on the will as real disorders, it must be evident to the most superficial student of the system, that the system is an absolute departure from, if not a complete contradiction of, the teaching and methods of Christ, as well as of science, as we know them. The laws of science are based upon the evidence of observed phenomena: Christian Science, so called, denies the reality of the observed phenomena. Christ, acknowledging the presence of sin as a destructive force in human life, and disease and suffering as its natural result, sought to eliminate or at least alleviate suffering and disease by eradicating their cause: Christian Science denies the existence of sin, ignores the reality of disease and suffering, and bids the sinner and sufferer destroy the fact by denying its existence.

To return to our immediate subject, the text of Scripture which I quoted to you as my text, because it seemed to describe the character of our blessed Lord's ministry, seems to indicate that His prevailing method of healing those who came or were brought to Him, was in crowds. But no one who studies the story of His life thoughtfully can fail to be struck with the fact that the usual form of His treatment of those who were afflicted either with spiritual, mental or physical ailments, was *personal*. Says Dawson again, "Nothing is more remarkable in the career of Jesus than the attention, sympathy and devotion which He devoted to individual inquirers after truth. Public men who have attained great eminence are usually inclined to regard their work in its collective aspect only. It was part of Christ's program, however, to encourage friendly, personal relations with all kinds of men. A casual glance at the Gospels is sufficient to convince us that Christ made constant use of this method of instruction: for three-fourths of the wise and exquisite sayings which are reported to us by the Evangelists were uttered to individuals or to little groups of men and women in familiar conversation."

Let me ask you why this was? And let me answer my own question by saying, that I believe one reason at least was because Christ's ministry was first of all that of a *physician* of the soul. And that therefore His methods were those of the physician.

To help those who came to Him, He needed to deal with them individually. He needed their individual confidence. He needed to hear from their own lips what ailed them; or in personal contact to diagnose their trouble, and to treat them accordingly. No one but a charlatan or a quack in medicine undertakes to prescribe one sort of treatment for all sorts of diseases, or even for the same disease in different persons. He must know the malady of each of his patients, and treat each of them to meet his or her needs. One of the most common phrases among physicians is, "Every case is a law unto itself." The physician can teach his patients the general laws of health *en masse*, but with the sick he must prescribe for them as individuals. And that is as true of spiritual disease and sin, as it is true of bodily sickness – the treatment depends on the diagnosis. And Jesus was a good Physician. He probed to the depths of the trouble. One woman said of Him, "Come, see a man that told me all things whatsoever I did!" And John remarks as an evidence of the independence of Jesus of human information in His dealings with men, and as a preface to the treatment which Nicodemus

received at His hands, “He needed not, that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man.”

It is this personal treatment, this individual cure of souls, which characterized the ministry of Jesus, that I desire to illustrate and apply in the short sermons which follow. Christianity has carried out the program of Jesus in part, and fulfilled the mission which He left to His Church through the Christian Science of medicine and surgery. There have been periods in Christian history, when the ministry of the Church has sought in its cure of souls to realize in large degree the spiritual side of the mission of healing through pastoral contact, which Jesus gave to the Twelve when He sent them forth, giving them “power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease.” In the earlier history of the Church in this country, through the intimate pastoral ministry of our predecessors, something of the power to help and heal the individuals who came under their ministry, that characterized the mission of the Twelve, was realized by these sainted pastors of the flock of Christ. But in our own day, through the changed conditions of society, the constant shifting of population, the rush and hurry of modern life, the multitudinous demands of modern parochial organization, there is a growing feeling that we have lost out of our ministry that individual touch and mutual confidence which is absolutely necessary for the successful realization of such a cure of souls as is set forth in the life of Jesus, and to which the ministry of the Church seems to have been commissioned. The Church has cast behind her the mechanical confessional of the Roman Church; and while approving her action, her ministry is failing to realize the application of the vital principle for which the confessional stood – the necessity of individual contact and mutual confidence in order to an intelligent and effectual ministry to the souls of men. It is that which the ministry of Jesus as the Great Physician practiced and enjoyed; and it is that which I desire to emphasize, however imperfectly, in these sermons: with the hope that under the inspiration of His example, and by the realization of the privilege for which the closing words of invitation in the Exhortation of the Communion Office stand, both clergy and laity, pastor and people, may be drawn together in a closer bond of sympathy and helpfulness.

What men need is not the administration of a formula of priestly absolution, but the assurance of pastoral sympathy – such a conviction of the power of the clergy to help and heal spiritual ailments, as they have of

the skill of the physician to whom they bring the story of their bodily ills – keeping nothing back, breaking down the barriers of reserve, laying bare the secrets of the soul as unreservedly as they are accustomed to lay bare those of the body.

It is this, and nothing more nor less, that I believe is the mind of the Church, when, in this invitation to the most blessed of all the privileges to which she calls her children, she bids them through her ministers, after self-examination – “if there be any of you, who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other minister of God’s Word, *and open his grief*; that he may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience, and the removal of all scruple and doubtfulness.”

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon us, His ministers, and make us worthy of such confidence, and having opened the doors of men’s hearts to us, may He give us grace and discerning skill to minister to each according to his needs!

## II. John the Baptist

“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, ‘art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?’ Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Go and show John again those things which ye do see and hear: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.’” Matt. 11:2–5.

As the first of our studies of Christ’s treatment of the individual, His methods for the Cure of Souls, we take up naturally the case of John the Baptist. His is the first figure that appears upon the scene of Christ’s public ministry, he was the first to proclaim Christ as the Divine healer of earth’s ills, he it was that heralded Him as the expected Redeemer of men when he cried on that first day of His public appearance on the banks of the Jordan, in the wilderness where John had prosecuted his ministry – “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!” And the very name with which John introduces Jesus gives the key to his own conception of the mission of Him whom he presents as the supreme representative of the new order of things in the religious emancipation of the Jews – “the Lamb of

God” – the perfectly pure and innocent. That is part, at least, of the idea conveyed by the word “Lamb”; and the modifying phrase “of God” simply emphasizes this aspect of the idea. We have here, concentrated in a single title, John’s fundamental conception of the new kingdom, as a state of society characterized by its cleanness, its external purity. John’s idea of religion was perfection in negative morality. He taught it in his stern warnings to those who came out of their cities into his wilderness home to hear him; he exemplified it in his own life of rigorous and self-renouncing obedience to the moral law.

And as long as he was allowed to perform his ministry in the open, as long as he stood on his feet and crowds flocked to the call of his terrible warnings, it served to uphold him. But when the power of his ministry waned, going down like a star at the dawn when the light of a mightier sun rose upon the world, when he lay bound in the dungeon of Herod, awaiting the sentence of death, gloom settled upon that strenuous and noble mind. He became a broken man. “Day by day, as he gazed from his dungeon on the craggy height of Machaerus over the wide prospect of the Judean desert with Jerusalem and the hills of Hebron to the south, the Jordan valley and the green palm groves of Jericho to the north – scenes familiar to him from his boyhood, and made doubly dear to him by the toils and triumphs of his ministry – the conviction grew upon him that he would tread these scenes no more. A cloud of despondency settled upon his mind. It seemed to him that he had lived in vain; perhaps at times he was ready to say with a later sage that men were not worth the trouble that he had taken over them.” And the man who had greeted and heralded the coming of Jesus as the Redeemer of mankind with clearest conviction and in ringing tones of faith, sank into a mood of despairing doubt, even to questioning the very character of Him whom he had welcomed so confidently and joyously. It was in this mood that John sent the disciples, who were still with him, to Jesus, inquiring, “Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?”

Now, mark Jesus’ treatment of John’s mood of despondent doubt. He did not rebuke him, as He might have been expected to rebuke the man who of all others might have been relied upon to retain an unwavering faith in the character and mission of Him whom he had proclaimed as the promised Messiah. He knew with perfect sympathy the depressing effects of such an experience as John was passing through in the dungeon of the merciless Herod. He knew perfectly, from His experience gathered in the crowded

haunts of men, as John with his desert experience and his life of the recluse could only know imperfectly and through hearsay, the spectacle which the world presented of hardened formalism in the established religion of the day, of defiant vice in the public walks of life, of retarding skepticism even in those who flocked to His ministry, of oppression and wrong in the high places, and of misery and sin in the low places of human society. And He knew the power of such conditions to destroy the faith of one whose ideal for the world was first of all its reformation from external immorality; and who saw conditions practically unchanged from what they were when His despondent herald ended his ministry, and He of whom he had expected so much for the reformation of human society took up His larger mission.

And Jesus treated John accordingly. He does not deny the evil of the times: He simply turns away from discussing it. His message of comfort and reassurance is based, not upon the eradication of evil but upon the good that is being accomplished; as a prophecy of what will be when the good has had time to run its full course. "Go, and show John again the things that ye have heard and seen," He says to the inquiring messengers. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

You see the implication contained in this message. It is as if Jesus had said, "Your trouble is that you are depressed by the meagerness of what has been done in a negative way, instead of being encouraged by what is being done in a positive way, for the relief of the world's evils. Your fault is in your conception of My mission, and the mission of all truly regenerative religion – that you demand external cleansing, the alleviation of the sores, while My work is the eradication of the cause of the sores. You would have men made good on the surface of their lives: I am seeking to change men from within by introducing the vital principle of health. You are demanding a change of clothes, making a new man by the casting off of the filthy garments of his sin: I am making new men by a new birth, by opening their eyes to things as they are, by giving them strength to walk upright and straight, by opening their ears to the voice of conscience from within and the voice of God from above, by removing the cause of their leprous defilement, by raising them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, and by giving a gospel of hope to those who are without

hope in this world. A change of view and of program is the remedy that you need: that is the cure for your soul's doubt."

Now what is the application of our Lord's treatment of John's case to the specific cases of those of our own day, and perhaps in this congregation, who are suffering from the same depression and despondency in their own individual experiences, because of what they see of the reign of evil in the world about them; or because of what they feel of the power of evil over them?

I would say to such victims of spiritual melancholia, in the light of Jesus' treatment of John – you need at least two things: first, you need a change of view. You are depressed by the spectacle of evil that you see around you, and that you feel ever pressing upon your own conduct and character. You are accustomed to think of the world as growing worse, instead of better; because your only, or chief, thought is of such signs of vicious practices and evil tendencies in society, in business, in politics, even in the Church. Your favorite hymns, if you are able to come out from under the shadow which such conditions have cast over your thoughts long enough to sing at all, are "The world is very evil, the times are growing late"; or, "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home: Earth's but a desert drear, Heaven is my home"; or else, it may be, "Weary of earth and laden with my sin, I look at heaven and long to enter in." Perhaps, you have even lost your faith altogether in the power of Christianity to overcome such evil in the world or in you; and have left the world, or given up yourself, to drift with the tide to what you believe is its inevitable destiny or your miserable fate.

In such moods of depressing despondency you need to turn your eyes altogether from the contemplated evil, and fix them upon the good that is being done and the progress that is being made, which are just as evident as the signs of decaying virtue and degrading vice. You need to stop looking out of the northern and western windows of the dungeon into which your interest in your own or the world's redemption has brought you – windows from which only the wastes, over which the north wind sweeps or the twilight of the western sun invests with the shadows of the dying day, are visible; and to look out of the eastern or southern windows, from which are visible the green fields on which the rising sun of a new day is shining, and over which the warm breezes of the south wind are blowing, bringing with them the springtide of the acceptable year of the Lord. Then you must

realize that the good is stronger than the evil in life; and that though it is slower – because it is constructive in its influence while the powers of evil are destructive, because it is harder to build up than it is to tear down – that, in the long run the good will conquer in the world and in you, “when God hath made the pile complete!”

And secondly, the other thing you need to do is to change your own program of overcoming evil. You must follow the program which Christ has set for you by His example. You need what someone has called “the expulsive power of a new affection”; you need to stop brooding over the evil, and to begin striving after the good. John was in his prison, and could not carry out such a program. His career of active service was at an end: but Christ had taken up his ministry where he had left off. Jesus was John’s representative, as you are His in the world. You are to be His busy hands and His hurrying feet, swift on His errands of mercy and relief, as He gives you the opportunity and with it the grace that guided and sustained Him. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,” is to be your motto. Get something to do for the good of others. Stop fighting the *evil* that is in you, and begin building up the *good* – the good will crowd out the evil. The life that is always about the Father’s business, will hardly find the time for getting into its own mischief. Stop thinking about yourself, and think of others. Stop thinking of the evil around you and the evil that is in you, for a change, and think of the opportunities for service offered you. Come out of the shadows! Come into the sunshine! Suppose “the world is very evil, and the times are waxing late” – what are *you* doing to make it better, or to lift your times to a higher plane. Stop thinking of the signs of sorrow and suffering that are the result of sin in the world; and think a bit about what you can do – and are not doing – to alleviate and heal such conditions.

### III Simon the Son of Jona

“And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, ‘Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.’” John 1:42.

JESUS’ treatment of Simon began when first He met him; no sooner had He looked into Simon’s face than He detected the fact that his trouble was organic. And He began his cure with the change of his name from

Simon bar Jona to Cephas in the Aramaic, or in the Greek, Petros, Peter, A rock or stone.

Looking on the outward aspect of the man, any one must have seen that the name fitted the new disciple; it described the ruggedness of this rough fisherman, his powerful physique, his swelling muscles, his rocklike pose. And to those who knew him the fitness of the name must have appealed as describing his known physical courage, his indomitable energy, his impetuous rush when started, his lack of polish, his immovable loyalty.

But that is not the chief reason, I think, for the name which Jesus gave him. It may have been suggested by these physical features: but it was bestowed as the result of the diagnosis which Jesus, the physician of souls, made of the man's spiritual defect. And the name was intended to be the first step in the treatment and final cure of that defect. Probing the depths of the man's nature, Jesus must have seen, as the friends of Simon already knew, that the fitness of the name ceased with its description of the man's physical attributes. "Sand" would have better described him morally and spiritually.

Nothing is more striking in a close study of the character of Simon Peter, than his fickleness of purpose, the inconsistency of his professions with his performance. He shifts from an attitude of boastful loyalty to one of shrinking timidity, as unexpectedly as the quicksands. One moment he is walking upon the crests of the waves, the next he is shrieking, "Lord, save or I perish." On one occasion he is heard professing "Though all shall forsake Thee, yet will I never forsake Thee: I will lay down my life for Thy sake"; and almost the next time we see him, he is denying the Master with oaths. One hour he draws his sword bravely in defense of Jesus from an armed band; and the next he is shrinking into the shadows before the suspicious question of a servant girl. With one exclamation he cries, "Lord, Thou shalt never wash my feet!" and in the next breath, "Lord, not my feet only, but my hands and my head!" Jesus knew this to be the character of Simon, when He made him His disciple, and it was because of His knowledge, and because He saw the deeper malady of which such seeming fickleness was but the symptom, that He gave Simon the name of "a rock". It was treatment by suggestion, as the doctors would say. Its object was by calling the man what he was not in his deeper nature, to make him that very thing. It was by kindling the fires of a noble ambition in the heart of Simon, the fisherman, that He sought to fuse the shifting sands of nature into the

strong rock of character of Peter the disciple. The material for making the man that Peter afterwards became was there; all that it needed was the trust and molding power to make him what he was capable of being. As in His treatment of John the Baptist, Jesus did not rebuke him for his weakness; He never rebuked him during the whole course of his discipleship save once, when Peter undertook to turn Him from His set purpose of following the path of duty which He was following at the peril of His life; and Jesus said to him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" He saw that what Peter needed was encouragement and confidence, and He gave it to him unstintedly by setting a standard for him that would be a constant inspiration and stimulus to his weakness. He gave him a name to live up to, a standard to attain, a record before he had won it; that whenever his moral cowardice endangered his loyalty he might remember his Master's trust and be strong.

It is hard to think of moral cowardice as Peter's trouble; and yet no one who has made a close study of the man's behavior in the crises of his discipleship can fail to see that that was his besetting sin. Strong in physical courage, he was always rushing into difficult places, only to grow weak when the call for physical courage ceased, and he needed moral stamina to sustain him. We see this most strikingly on that shameful occasion in Peter's life, when just after he had drawn his sword with unflinching bravery, when his brave loyalty had led him into the very lion's den in the house of the High Priest after all the disciples but John and himself had fled – he was cowed by the laugh of a servant girl, goaded to profanity by the taunting sneer of the loungers about the fire, driven to deny even an acquaintance with his Master by the fear of being numbered among the followers of the despised Galilean. It is pitiful, and yet the picture is only too true to life.

One of the commonest spiritual defects that we meet with among men is moral cowardice. And it is by no means confined to weak natures. On the contrary it is the peculiar fault of those who are known as otherwise strong characters. It is a danger in which we all stand, a weakness to which we are all prone at times. For, to use the words of another, moral cowardice "is originally a weakness rather than a positive sin, and yet is probably as prolific of sin and even of great crime as any of the more definite and vigorous passions of our nature, such as hate, lust, avarice. It is that weakness which prompts a man to avoid difficulties, to escape everything rough and disagreeable, to yield to circumstances, and which above all

makes him incapable of facing the reproach, contempt, or opposition of his fellow men. It is often found in combination with much amiability of character. It is commonly found in persons who have some natural leanings to virtue, and who, if circumstances would only favor them, would prefer to lead, and would lead, at least an inoffensive and respectable, if not a very useful, noble or heroic life. Finely strung natures that are very sensitive to all impressions from without, natures which thrill and vibrate in response to a touching tale, or in sympathy with fine scenery or soft music; natures which are housed in bodies of delicate nervous temperament, are commonly keenly sensitive to the praise or blame of their fellows, and are therefore liable to moral cowardice, though by no means necessarily a prey to it." I think that this is a fair analysis of the case, and a reliable diagnosis of its cause.

Let us see if there are any before me to whom the diagnosis applies. Here are some of its commonest symptoms. A man whose physical courage is so strong an element of his nature, or whose moral courage is impregnable under circumstances when the issues are perfectly clear and open, who would storm a height bristling with difficulties, or go through fire and water in the interest of patriotism or to defend a principle, or to rescue the suffering; who will be as quickly turned aside from what he knows to be his duty under the light laugh or flippant sneer of his companions: who is more afraid of being called straight-laced or Puritanical or old fogey than he is of violating a sacred principle under such circumstances; who, rather than be laughed at, will enter into the zest with which his companions enjoy a filthy jest, or engage in a drinking bout which both his conscience and his natural instinct disapprove, simply because he does not want to seem odd or to appear to condemn the customs of his set. Here is a woman, of high moral and spiritual ideals, capable of any amount of self-sacrifice in ministering to the wants of her family, her friends or the destitute; who against the dictates of her own conscience, against her training and native susceptibilities, will enter into some custom or submit to some demand of the social set of which she is a member, rather than seem to violate the laws of social convention or obtrude her own views upon the pleasure of those with whom her lot has thrown her: who, if she follows the dictates of her own conscience and judgment, would not engage in any game of cards in which there was the nearest approach to or slightest appearance of gambling, or any tendency leading up to it in the future; who

feels that it is a dangerous thing and a bad example for any woman to drink even the lightest of wines in the most temperate manner in company; who hates gossip in its most agreeable forms – yet who, in any of these cases yields her principles to the demands of custom and convention, and joins in the habits of her set. Here is a man in business, or a woman in society, who knows that his or her expenditures are in excess of their incomes, yet who has not the courage to reduce them for fear of seeming to be lacking in generous hospitality, or of not making the show that their social position demands of them. Here is a man who knows that there are sharp, shrewd, unfair methods of trade, which his conscience condemns; and yet for lack of moral courage or for fear of missing his ambitions, has not the courage to break away from them. And your own experience and observation will doubtless fill in countless other illustrations of the same sort of thing.

There can be but one exciting cause back of such weakness, and that is moral cowardice. I ask you, does your knowledge of your own conduct convict you of any of its forms? If it does, I am not going to rebuke you, nor to lecture you. I would simply ask permission to prescribe the Master's cure to you, and ask you to apply it for the cure of your soul's malady – moral cowardice.

When Jesus called Simon to be His disciple, and renamed him Peter, it was simply an appeal to the best that was in him, which he was not exercising. It was something like Lord Nelson's charge to his men at Trafalgar – “England expects every man to do his duty!” When Peter denied Him near the close of his discipleship, Jesus simply looked upon him as He came out of the Hall of Judgment: and it was as though Jesus had said to Peter, “Hast thou forgotten thy name?” It was the thought embodied in that ancient phrase of nobility, “Noblesse oblige.”

That is all I have to say. When you are tempted to betray your principles in response to social convention or public opinion or any other influence – Remember your name – Christian!

#### IV. Nathanael

“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!’” – John 1:47.

JESUS' method of treatment of Nathaniel was substantially the same as that which He applied to Peter. Except that while He fixed the eyes of Peter upon the future, He turned the gaze of Nathaniel back upon the past.

What Peter needed was an inspiration: and He gave it to him, by giving him a name which would be a constant stimulus to his endeavor, a prophecy of what he might be if he used the latent capabilities within his nature. What Nathaniel needed was a reminder: and Jesus gave it to him, by recalling a name out of the annals of the past, which would be a wholesome deterrent to his disposition to judge without evidence, a warning against pronouncing condemnation without a hearing.

For the fault in Nathaniel which our Lord sought to cure was *prejudice*. When Philip declared to him, “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” – Nathaniel promptly retorted, without further questioning or investigation, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” It is obviously the retort of a prejudiced mind, a narrow conception of the possible sources of truth and righteousness, a preconceived notion of where truth is to be found, coupled with an unwillingness to believe in its possession by any others than those of the individual’s way of thought and conduct.

If you know anything about the Galilee or the Nazareth of our Lord’s time, you may easily answer that it was only natural that Nathaniel was prejudiced against the claim that the expected Messiah had come from such a village in such a district. For Nathaniel was what we would call in Christian history a “Pietist” in his devotion to meditative religion, a “Puritan” in his rigid conceptions of moral law, and a “Schoolman” in the high appreciation which he put upon learning and culture. And Galilee was the synonym for irreligiousness, commercialism and ignorance. Every maid servant in Jerusalem ridiculed the language of the Galileans; and the manners and morals of its people had the reputation as being as light and frivolous as its speech was illiterate. Nathanael distrusted Nazareth, he distrusted any part of Galilee. It was too near the Gentiles for him, too much under the influence of the forces of worldliness to be able to produce a leader of religious thought and conduct such as Nathaniel cherished. And so with such ideals in his mind, when he hears that the professed Messiah came from Nazareth, the words spring to his lips as naturally as water from the living rock, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

No, Nathaniel’s case is neither unique nor unnatural. It is the very opposite. People of strong convictions are generally easily prejudiced. Holding their own views tenaciously, it is hard to get them to change them or even to make room for new suggestions of truth. And such prejudice

against the views of others naturally extends to those who hold them. I have not time to consider at length the widespread influence of prejudice in its larger aspects, except to agree with another, that “never was there a new invention, a new departure in art, an original effort for social advance or religious progress, which did not encounter the dead, dull weight of the opposition of general prejudice.” It is of its effects upon character in its more personal and intimate associations, that I want to speak to you; of the way in which it poisons and cripples your nature when you allow it to dominate your conduct in the everyday relations which you enjoy with those who are nearest to you in your daily life.

You belong to a certain religious organization which for you is the Church; for you the dearest associations of your life are bound up in it; it has fostered your religious life from your infancy, its services and customs are dear to you, no other ministrations would be acceptable to you. And it is right that you should feel so. But there are other people who have been trained differently, whose religious thought is different, whose ideas of worship and order are different; but who, so far as you know, under circumstances which would be wholly uncongenial to you, have lived as devoted and useful Christian lives as you have. And how often is it true that you let your prejudices govern your judgments of them and their ways. Because they differ from you in such matters of worship and doctrine and order, you assume that there is no good in them in any other respect; or that, if there is, it is so far overshadowed by these other points of difference that they are not entitled to your recognition of the worth that you must see is theirs if only you will take the trouble to open your eyes and look.

You belong to a certain social circle in society. It is the circle perhaps in which you were born, and whose distinctive merits are in no sense your contrivance. You value its advantages over those of any other conceivable social conditions. But is that any reason why you should let your prejudice blind you to the excellent qualities which some other circle or station in society may possess? And yet half the cause of the jealousy, hatred and all uncharitableness that characterize the relations of society in general, is just this blind prejudice which arrays class against class, and set against set: when all classes and sets would be the richer, if they only took the pains to lay aside their prejudices and the trouble to understand each other.

You are prejudiced against a certain individual. It is true it is largely a case of instinctive dislike, of lack of affinity. But as the result of your

utterly ungrounded prejudice, you are unable to see any good whatever in that person, and do not hesitate to so express your opinion as to do untold harm to him or her: when, if you took the trouble to know the person in the least, you might see that your judgment of him was not only false, but that knowing him, your liking was as cordial as your dislike had been intense.

Now note Jesus' treatment of Nathaniel. His reception of Nathaniel was as cordial and generous as Nathaniel's rejection of the claims of His Messiahship, when first they were presented to him by Philip, had been narrowminded and prejudiced. Nathaniel had said without further investigation, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Jesus said, judging the man from the purity of His motives and piety, as evidenced to Him by his devotions under the fig tree, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" If Nathaniel still had any distrust of Jesus, His generosity dispelled it: if he still disbelieved in Him as the promised Messiah, the words of Jesus – "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" – dispelled his doubt and drew from his lips the fervent acknowledgment, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the king of Israel."

What was the essence of our Lord's treatment of Nathaniel's prejudice, what is the secret of its cure? I think it is to be found in the words with which Jesus first greeted Nathaniel – "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile!" It is as if Jesus had said to him – "You are a devout Israelite; your days are spent in an intense attitude of expectation of the fulfillment of the promise to Israel in the Messiah; but you have been looking for its fulfillment only along the lines of your preconceived notions, you are blinded to the possibilities of His coming in other ways by your prejudice. Remember that the very name Israel stands for the experience of one who all his life was the recipient of unexpected blessings, and good from unlooked-for sources. When an exile from home, without a friend in the world, – as Jacob, the heavens were opened above his rocky pillow, and the God, whom he thought had also forsaken him, sent His angels to comfort him; and again when he lost his old, hard name to receive the new name of Israel, it was in an hour and under conditions when naught but evil seemed to be possible to his future career. And remembering this, open your mind to the truth from every source however unlikely it may seem to produce it; put away your prejudices which only blind you to its coming in the fullness of time; and you too like your father Israel shall see the heavens

opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

You must see the application to your own needs, if you are suffering from the blinding effects of prejudice. It is this: try to be openminded; hold yourself in readiness to seek the truth come whence it may, cost what it will; look for the good in institutions, in social circles, in individuals, rather than the evil; remember that if others judge your character as you have prejudged theirs, you may receive the same sort of treatment at their hands that you are giving someone else. The little quatrain is somewhat hackneyed, and often misapplied to a weak sort of tolerance of evil in people; but there is a world of truth in it when used in the proper sense of encouraging charity in our judgment .of others. I speak of the lines:

There is so much good in the worst of us,  
And so much bad in the best of us,  
That it scarce behooves any of us  
To talk about the rest of us.

The ring of them is like the words of Jesus, who, while He knew as none other the faults and foibles of Nathaniel, looked beneath the faults and saw the good, and said – “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!” To catch the spirit of Jesus is to learn the cure for prejudice; who began His ministry by His generous praise of the good that He found in Peter and Nathaniel, regardless of their faults, and fixed His gaze upon that: who, in the agony which His persecutors and executioners had inflicted, with dying breath prayed for them, saying, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!”

## V – Nicodemus

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.” –John 3:7.

IT is no wonder that Nicodemus marveled. That he, a member of the highest religious body in the Jewish Church, the Sanhedrin, a man of rich and deep religious culture, a man of blameless moral character in the eyes of the people of his day and community; and last of all an old man, his hair white in the service of God and the Church – that he, coming to Christ, not so much for treatment of any spiritual trouble as to find out what Jesus knew of the proper treatment of the evils of the day, should be informed that

in order to become a member of the kingdom of heaven “he must be born again!” And yet that is clearly just what Jesus did say, and just as clearly what He meant, to those who have looked into Nicodemus’ case most thoroughly. Indeed, Jesus Himself leaves no room for doubt that He was prescribing for Nicodemus, and not merely for the unregenerate at large. To make sure that Nicodemus would not leave himself out of the category of those who needed a new birth, Jesus passes from His consideration of the general law, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” which He twice repeats; to a specific application to Nicodemus, when He says, “Marvel not that I said unto *thee*, ye must be born again.” The man who comes to Jesus, whom he acknowledges to be a great Physician, in order that he, himself a physician, might perhaps obtain new light in the treatment of others, is himself taken as a patient, and prescribed a treatment so radical as to require complete regeneration, the making over of the whole man.

Nicodemus, as you know, was a Pharisee, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, you might say, since he was a member of the ruling body, the Sanhedrin. It is true that he was a very unusual Pharisee, but to have held the position he did, it must have been that, with the essential principles of what constituted the Pharisaism of his day, he was substantially in accord, and thoroughly under their influence. To get at the need of Nicodemus then we must understand, as Jesus did, just what the heart of Pharisaism was. And knowing that, we shall know why Jesus said to Nicodemus, classing his need with those of the lowest sinners that came to Him for help, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”

And this was the essence of Pharisaism, that it possessed all the virtues of the age with the taint of the motive of the individual. A Pharisee would cut off his hand, or pluck out his eye, willingly, rather than break one of the commandments of the old Law, or depart from the letter; but in the very keeping of what he understood to be the letter of the law he would violate its whole spirit. This is shown over and over again in the criticisms which the sect of the Pharisees passed upon the ministry of Jesus. In their defense of the letter of the Sabbath laws, they condemned Him for healing a sick man on the Sabbath: they criticized Him for eating with those He came to seek and to save; they hauled a poor, miserable woman before Him for His condemnation. They were as lacking in spiritual charity, in sympathy, in courtesy, in humility, in all things which are the hallmarks of the spiritual

life, as a sparkling crystal is of life. “Ye are like unto whited sepulchers,” Jesus said to them, “which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within ye are full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”

That would be a hard description of the individual Nicodemus, you will say, if you remember his after connection with the career of Jesus. How he stood up for Him in the Sanhedrin when Jesus was on trial for His life; how he took His body down from the Cross and laid it tenderly in the new tomb. And, as I said, Nicodemus was an unusual Pharisee, he was the only Pharisee whom Jesus ever seems to have made any impression upon. But while he may have been free from many of the faults of his class, he must have possessed their general spirit and view of things. He was without the vital principle of the new life which Jesus was offering to men, and so he needed just the treatment that Jesus recommended – it was necessary that he be born again. He possessed Pharisaic righteousness; he needed Christian goodness. He saw life from the standpoint of the law; he needed to see it from the standpoint of the spirit; and nothing short of a complete change, so radical as to be termed by Jesus a new birth, could effect that end.

One of the most prominent characteristics of Pharisaism was the *pride* of its adherents. Jesus said of them that “they counted themselves righteous and despised others”; that was pride in its worst form. That Nicodemus had some of it cannot be doubted. The fact that he came to Jesus at night, and secretly, is an evidence of his pride. He did not want to be known as a disciple of Jesus. If He had any truth to teach him he was willing to learn, but not to be known publicly as a follower. To learn of Jesus was one thing, but to be a confessed follower quite another. It would never do for a prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin to be known as the follower of the despised Nazarene. To have become an open and avowed disciple would have been to change the whole current of his life. And that was just what Jesus required of him; just the one thing which Jesus demanded of His secret admirers. And that is what He demands of you.

Christianity has won for itself almost universal recognition. Its ideals are the inspiration of the best that is in our civilization. It has become so wrought into the fabric of our lives and institutions that we have ceased to a large degree to recognize its presence and influence in them altogether. Whatever men may think of the Church, whatever maybe their attitude towards organic and orthodox Christianity, its sacraments, its doctrines, its institutions – there can be no question as to their admiration of the Christ

and what His life and teaching stand for. But it is true of many that they are contented to let their admiration and partial obedience suffice. If they must be disciples at all, they choose to be secret disciples, disciples of the night. But Jesus demands open confession, complete change of view, of service, of spirit.

Are you giving Him that? Or are you seeking to serve Him outside the fold of His recognized Church? If so, why is it? Are you ashamed of being known as His follower? Does your pride stand in the way of your admitting the incompleteness of your service, and coming out before the world an avowed follower and disciple? Then what you need as the first step in your regeneration, is the crucifixion of your pride. You can't serve Him as you ought to do outside His Church, because in addition to the grace and strength which He has provided for you and left in the keeping of that Church, membership in it is the only way in which you can be formally known as a Christian. Outside of His Church, your influence will be arrayed against His religion whether you choose or not.

It is still true today, as when He said, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." The world instead of recognizing a man as a Christian disciple because of his exemplary life, will use his example as an argument against the Church and Christianity if the man is not in the Church. How often have you heard it said, "Mr. A. is not a member of the Church," or "Mr. B. is not a Christian; and if I can lead as exemplary a life as he does, what's the use of my joining the Church?"

I think Jesus had some such objection in mind when He said, not only "Except a man be born of the Spirit," but "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit"; and "water" is the outward and visible sign of the first step in Church membership. He puts it first in order, because it is the only part of the new birth that the individual seeking the new life has control of: the gift of the Spirit and His gracious influences is in the power and keeping of God alone; Baptism, Church membership, are entirely within the choice and will of the individual. Jesus recognizes no secret discipleship as possible in His kingdom; He needs you in the open day of human society, He needs your avowed service, He needs your influence. Whatever you are or may become, is the tribute which you owe to Him, the service which you must lay at His feet. If you have found Him in the night, as did Nicodemus of old, it is well. He has no word of rebuke for you because you have

*sought* Him secretly; but from henceforth He bids you “Walk in the light, as He is in the light.” He has left you this message as His own divine purpose, “Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven; but whosoever denieth Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.” “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify (not *you* but) your Father which is in heaven.”

Can you do it by refusing even to be called by His name? Will you not do it – if you have already had the first step taken for you by the “water” which was poured upon your infant brow, on which also was signed the sign of the Cross, – by renewing those vows in confirmation that you may put yourself in the way of all the gracious influences of the agent of that new birth, the Holy Spirit, walking in the light and in the spirit that you may not fulfill the lust of the flesh, but may continue His faithful soldier and servant until your life’s end?

## VI – The Woman of Samaria

“Jesus answered and said unto her, ‘If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, “Give me to drink,” thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.’” John 4:10.

THE meeting of Jesus with the woman of Samaria follows immediately after His conference with Nicodemus. And His treatment of these strangely different cases was strikingly alike, both in its method and character. Dawson in his recent “Life of Christ” says: “The message to Nicodemus and the message to the woman of Sychar, are substantially one. Christ bids this virtuous Pharisee and this dissolute woman meditate upon the same truth – the forgotten spirituality of their own natures. Nicodemus had forgotten this in the arid casuistries of Pharisaism, the woman in the coarse animalism of her life. But until man remembers that he is a spiritual creature, religion is impossible to him. He may be moral or immoral, decorous or depraved, but religious he cannot be, simply because religion is a perception of the spiritual side of things. It is ‘the romance of the infinite,’ not however, as it exists in the mysteries of space, but in the human heart itself. Neither of these persons had realized this capacity for the infinite,

this ‘eternity in the heart,’ as the Hebrew poet finely called it; and although Nicodemus would have scorned to speak to this woman, and would have been deeply affronted at the thought of being included for a moment in the same category with her, yet they are alike in this, that each is thoroughly unawakened to the spiritualities of life. He, eager to discuss abstruse questions of Messiahship, and she, equally eager to discuss the relative values of Jewish and Samaritan worship, are really speaking the same language. And so for each there is but one message for man, whatever may be the decorum or indignity of his life; he must be born again into a belief in his own spiritual nature, and know himself as a living soul come out from God, and returning to God, before the bare conception of religion is possible to him.”

That’s a pretty hard classification, isn’t it – which puts the refined and respectable man or woman of the world in the same category with the social outcast and morally degenerate? That classes Nicodemus the arbiter of morals with the woman charged with the worst sin against society? It literally tears the garments of our moral respectability off of our backs, and stands us naked by the side of the brazen shamelessness of scandalous vice. And the world has never received such classification kindly. It fails to see why morality should not be taken at its own estimate, and if it shows the same works outwardly as spirituality, be rated quite as high. I have heard very excellent people criticize our Litany severely, saying that they did not feel called upon to term themselves “miserable sinners”; for the simple reason that they were not. Well, I suppose, that will always be the feeling as long as “man looketh upon the outward appearance”; but as soon as he gets the Godward view of himself, he will see the justice of such an estimate, for “God looketh upon the heart.” The world marvels just as Nicodemus did, that the righteous should need to be born again; though it has no doubt about the necessity of a new birth for the vicious and depraved. The strange thing is that the woman of Samaria marveled at the words of Jesus as much as Nicodemus did: she knew as little as he did, the need of spiritual regeneration. Jesus recognized her ignorance of her spiritual condition at once, for He says to her, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that sayest unto thee, ‘Give me to drink,’ thou wouldest have asked Him, and He would have given thee living water.” Nor did she understand until Jesus, probing the secrets of her past, revealed to her own conscience her sins, and then only she said to those whom she hastened to inform of her new friend,

“Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?”

And that’s the strange thing about all sin; that the flagrant sinner has no more sense of the guilt of his particular violation of the moral law, or his need of spiritual regeneration, than the morally righteous has. As men sink lower in the moral scale they get new standards for themselves; they no longer gauge their actions by the old standards; they are content if they come up to the requirements of the class of which they are members. That was true of this Samaritan woman, adulteress though she was: an outcast from respectable society, she had come to measure her deeds by the standard of the moral pariahs with whom she associated. It was only when she came in touch with the spiritual purity of her newfound friend, the Christ; it was only when her vileness lay under the clear gaze of His pure eyes, and she saw herself through His eyes, that she realized her moral and spiritual condition, and felt the spiritual thirst that caused her to ask, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.”

Let us see if I am right in saying that unconsciousness of guilt is partly due to variations in standard to suit the varying conditions of human life. Suppose I should claim the right to go to any theatrical play that comes to town, suppose I should go to a good play during this holy season of self-denial, suppose I should claim the right to play cards, staking just enough to make the game interesting, suppose I should take a social drink whenever it pleased me, stepping into the nearest barroom to get a glass of beer, suppose I should claim the right to stay at home on Sunday and read the Sunday newspaper when I had some other clergyman to take my place, or any of the other hundred and one things, that I am not supposed to have a right to do? And why haven’t I a right, if it is all right for you who profess and call yourselves Christians? “Oh, no,” you say, “you ought not to do these things because you are a parson!” Will you show me one place in the New Testament which says there shall be one standard for the clergy and another for the laity? Don’t you know perfectly well that if all Christians would take the standard they require of the clergy for theirs, their influence would be increased tenfold? Why do you think it would be wrong for me then, while it is right for you, to do these things? Why indeed, but because you are living, you think, under a different standard which society has set for you, and you have no consciousness of guilt as long as you come up to it?

Let me take another illustration. I may say to the average business man, "You ought not to do this thing or that in your business." And he will promptly answer me, "That is necessary in my business; you can't do business profitably any other way." What is that but saying that business life has its own standards which excuse a man from the same sort of scruples that should govern him in other things. Do you suppose people who live under such rules, have any consciousness of guilt?

And if you go to the lowest barkeeper in town, and question him about his feeling about the iniquity of his trade, he will tell you perfectly honestly and conscientiously, that he doesn't see any harm in his trade. And if you think he is lying to you, you will be mistaken. He has simply, as he sank, taken new standards of measurement, until now he has the barkeeper's standard, and his conscience is just as self-complacent as that of the most respectable Pharisee in town. Does that statement startle you? Well, it's true nevertheless. And you can carry it still farther if you want, and examine the prisoners in your town jail, and you will find them just as devoid of any consciousness of guilt. You knew that, but perhaps you have always thought such people were lying to you. They were not. They were just as truthful as your moral man in his estimate of his conduct. They have made their standards to suit their conduct. And it will always be true of them until their conscience is awake; until they come into the light of new standards; until that happens to them which happened to the Samaritan woman, and they stand under the clear gaze of some pure soul like that of Jesus and see themselves as He sees them, as they are by the standard of His holiness, and not as they are by the standard of their class.

Do you remember the prayer of Jesus for His executioners, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" That's His prayer for you, my friend, just as well as for those who crucified Him. And you need it just as much as they did, if you are living only by the light of the low-pitched standards of the world or the society in which you move. "If thou *knewest*," Jesus said to the woman, – "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give Me to drink,' thou wouldest ask of Him and He would give to you living water." I bring the same message to you. "If thou knewest the gift of God, if thou knewest the blessedness and the peace and the joy of the life which is spent in an endeavor to live up to the Christian ideal as it is in Christ: if thou knewest who it is that asks service of you, – not the poorest but the best you have to give, – you would ask of Him and

He would give you that which would satisfy the infinite longings of your soul, which now you are trying to satisfy wholly with the dregs and husks of material and sensuous aims and pleasures.

There is but one cure for spiritual want, whether it is felt or not, and that is first – self-revelation, by bringing your life by the side of Christ’s and seeing yourself as you are in comparison; and then – self-surrender, by bringing your will into subjection to His, that He may lead you into green pastures and beside the still waters of the life that is hid with Christ in God.

When you have brought your life to Him, and have seen it through His eyes, then like another sinner, so shall it be with you. What her experience was the poet has described for you:

She sat and wept beside His feet: the weight  
Of sin oppressed her heart, for all the blame  
And the poor mantle of the worldly shame  
To her were past, extinct and out of date;  
Only the sin remained – the leprous state.

\* \* \* \* \*

She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair  
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch,  
And He wiped off the soiling of despair  
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.

## VII –The Impotent Man

“When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, ‘Wilt thou be made whole?’” – John 5: 6.

OUR study of our Lord’s treatment of those who came to Him during His ministry of the Cure of Souls, brings us today to the consideration of a different case from those with which we have been concerned heretofore. The trouble of the man who lay with a host of others – “a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water” – by the side of the pool of Bethesda, which was commonly believed to have miraculous powers of healing at certain seasons – the trouble of this man it seems was altogether physical. He had had, we are told, “an infirmity thirty and eight years,” he was in other words what we should call a confirmed invalid, and his case seemed to be a hopeless one, and it would seem that he himself had so accepted it. He was helpless himself, and he informed Jesus, he had no moan when the water was troubled, to put him

into the pool; and that while he was coming, another stepped down before him. Whether there was really any healing power inherent in the waters of the pool, is not the question which concerns us here. It is hard to believe that there was; but the fact of the popular tradition remains, undoubted by the people who had come there, and it is probable that they had some grounds of experience or observation upon which to base their belief. It is quite certain that people had been healed there, whatever the cause of the health which they received. It is equally probable, I think, that many who had tried the efficacy of the waters were not healed. The failures were not mentioned, as is usually the case; people only heard of those who *thought* they had some organic malady and tried the waters of Bethesda, and went away well and strong. Those who really had such deep-seated disease or malady, as could only be cured by methods unknown to the medicine and surgery of the day, probably went away after their bath in much the same condition as they came or were brought.

And herein is, I believe, the secret of our Lord's treatment of this particular case. Before Him in all probability He saw a man suffering from the effects of a weak will, a will which had suffered paralysis, which was so crippled and helpless as the result of an imaginary ailment, that its possessor had ceased even to try to exert it. Let me pause here to say that I am by no means belittling the power of Jesus to work miracles; but His methods of treatment varied with the needs of the individual. He made His diagnosis of each case that presented itself, and treated the ailment accordingly, whether it was spiritual, mental, or physical.

And the change which Jesus accomplished in this man was in effect a miracle. To be helpless as the result of an atrophied will, is as much a hopeless state of invalidism, as to be helpless because of a diseased body. And Jesus quickened his will, He sent him away well and strong, carrying the bed which had been the symbol of his helplessness during all those years of his self-imposed impotence.

You ask me what grounds I have for such a bold speculation. And I answer common experience, the facts of the case, and our Lord's question addressed to the man. Common experience and observation teach us that a vast number of the supposed ills of humanity are purely imaginary. They are the result of morbid self-interest, which leads people to think that they have diseases and ills that they hear of in others; and such people lacking the power to throw off such suggestions sink under them to the helpless

state in which they behold others. They are simply the victims of a paralyzed will.

The facts of the case are that some people were healed, or else there would be no such superstitious faith in the efficacy of the waters, as there undoubtedly was. And in the case of this particular man, we have from his own lips what seems to have been the admission that he was able to go down to the waters himself – “While I am coming, another steppeth down before me” – his difficulty was that he had no one to put him in the waters, and his weakened condition disabled him from getting down fast enough to intercept the eager crowd. He had will enough to limp to the waters, but not will enough to “Rise, take up his bed, and walk.” And Jesus confirms what I have said in tracing the method of His diagnosis, by the question, “*Wilt* thou be made whole?” It is as if He had said, “My poor fellow, the waters of Bethesda will not help you in themselves. What you need is to exercise your will, to bring into play the powers that you have simply lost through voluntary or involuntary disuse. Put forth your will, arouse yourself out of your miserable state of imaginary helplessness. Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” “And immediately,” we read, “the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” Jesus by the power of His own will, infused into the man, simply gave him the ability to use his own latent powers. And knowing so little of the power of mental suggestion, of a strong will and confident purpose, over those of weak wills and a lack of purpose, His times set His work down as one of the miracles which He wrought, which were wholly beyond the powers of man, such as cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind and raising the dead.

You see the distinction I make. Here is a case not so much of physical healing – that was only incidental – but rather of mental healing, the restoration of latent faculties by mental suggestion.

And therein lies the secret of the success of much that is done for the restoration of health or activity by the science of medicine today. Therein lies the secret, I believe, of all the triumphs of so-called Christian Science and mental healing today. Namely, in getting people to use the powers that they have, and that they have simply allowed to fall into disuse. The patient is told, “You must believe that you are well. There is no such thing as disease or infirmity. Act as though you were well, and you will be well. Will to be whole and you are whole.” And such treatment is all that is necessary, if there is nothing really the matter with the person, except such

disability as has been brought about by a weakened will. And such maladies, though the product of a diseased imagination, may be so serious as to make a man as helpless as the poor victim here described, who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

I cannot leave this subject without at least calling your attention to the effect that such weakness of the will has in men's spiritual experiences. The paralysis of the soul is as real in spiritual experience as is that of the body. And oftener than otherwise is due to the same cause. How many there are, both of men and women, like this impotent man by the pool of Bethesda, whose spiritual activities have lain passive all of their lives for no other conceivable reason than that they have not bestirred themselves. Their will to do good, or to be good, has for so long a time been inactive that they have come to feel, like this poor helpless wretch, that anything really worthwhile is impossible to them. They see others going down before them, as did he, to some waters of healing, and coming up again to add their energies and resources to the work and worship of life, while they themselves degenerate into mere spectators of the work others are doing and the characters they are making for themselves, – their own lives impotent of moral and spiritual endeavor.

And what's the matter with them? Nothing really. Certainly nothing organic, nothing that interferes with their performance of the work and duties of life. Nothing that would keep them from making just as noble a spiritual destiny for themselves as others – if they *will*. And there's the secret. It will not do to say, somewhat as this unfortunate at Bethesda said, that they have no man to help them into the way of holy living and useful service. The watchword of the Christian method of salvation (and "salvation" in its etymological sense simply means "health") – the watchword of Christian health is "Work out *your own* salvation – work out your own *health* – with fear and trembling – not alone indeed – "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and do His own pleasure." But the initiative is with the individual. The first step back to any sort of health, is the free exercise of the will. Christ cannot heal you unless you *will*. And if you *will*, there is absolutely no barrier that you cannot overcome with the help that He is always holding out to you.

Men commit murder, and plead temporary insanity. They steal and it is kleptomania, or the overpowering temptations of their circumstances. They fall into the sins of passion, and it is some inherited taint of the flesh.

They drink, and it is a consuming thirst which was born in them. They do some wrong to their neighbor, and it is an ungovernable temper. They gossip and lie, and it is because they have no natural control of their tongues. Always it is some defect of the spiritual nature. Some spiritual disease that makes their cases unique, over which they have no inherent control, and which should excuse them where others would be condemned or punished. That's their excuse. While all the time the truth is that they have not *willed* to do otherwise. The weakness is not in an organically diseased nature, but in their wills which through lack of exercise have suffered paralysis.

And the Master's cure for such cases – the Master's cure for you, my friend, if you are hiding behind the cherished sophistry that you have sinned because constituted as you are you could not help sinning – is, “Rise, take up your bed, and walk!” Rise out of your old slothful indifference and lassitude, cast off the delusion upon which all of your life you have been resting, and *walk* – walk into the new life with fresh vigor, with renewed energies, with consecrated purpose, with a will that shirks not its function but attacks the difficulties and problems of life's journey with courage and high hope. Have you a will to be holy? Then use it ! And God will do His part.

## VIII – The Paralytic

“And behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: ‘Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.’” – Matt. 9:2.

THE cases which have come up for our study thus far in the chronological order in which they stand in the Gospel narratives, with the single exception of John the Baptist who stands in a class by himself, have fallen into pairs, almost as though I had planned the arrangement myself. Peter and Nathaniel, the one treated by giving him a standard to live up to, the other, an example not to fall behind; Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, the righteous moralist and the degraded sensualist, both needing the revival of a forgotten spirituality of nature; and now, the impotent man of Bethesda and the paralytic whom his friends brought to Jesus, both seemingly with an incurable paralysis – the one needing only the invigoration of a weakened will, the other, as we shall see, stricken by a real

paralysis and needing a radical treatment of the seat of his disease, if ever he should again take his place among the healthy and able-bodied.

There is no suggestion on the part of Jesus that sin had any part in bringing about or prolonging the condition in which He found the impotent man, as in the case of the paralytic. And yet silence does not leave the former guiltless. A close study of the New Testament, and therefore Christian idea of sin, and what it means to be a sinner, will reveal the fact, I think, that the New Testament conception is far more comprehensive than that of popular religion. For the very word “sin” carries with it the idea of failure to realize the highest well-being – “hamartia,” it is in the Greek, “missing the mark,” falling below the standard of what a man is expected to do, falling short of the destiny of what he is intended to be, physically, mentally and spiritually. Every sphere of his being is involved in the failure of any sphere to perform its functions. And that because in actual experience it is impossible to separate human nature into its component parts, to determine where the influence of body stops and that of mind begins, or where the activity of mind ends and that of spirit begins, – so inextricably are all woven together in our present constitution that when one suffers all suffer, and all are involved in the baneful effects of what we call “sin”. If that be true, then the failure of the impotent man to use his will was sin, because thereby the man failed to do and to be what his whole human nature demanded of him. To go no further than his physical nature, he was living like a vegetable, instead of as a breathing, moving, working member of the higher sphere into which he was born; to go higher still, he was existing as a parasite, instead of as a helpful, useful, loving member of society; and in the spiritual realm of his being, if he had any of the virtues and graces of the spiritual life at all, they were only the passive virtues and graces – the helplessness which his weak will had imposed upon him cut him off from the exercise of those active graces of ministering service which are the crowning glory of the spiritual life.

But Jesus at least leaves no doubt as to the radical cause of the malady from which the paralytic now under study was suffering. His first word to him as he lay a helpless suppliant at His feet, whither the loving hands of others had brought him, is a complete disclosure of the seat of his trouble, as He says to him – “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” He probes to the depths of the man’s inner life, He lays bare the secret cause of his affliction, He leaves no doubt as to His diagnosis of this

man's sickness; and the cause He declares to be "Sin". Before He answers the faith of the man's friends, before He answers the mute plea of the man's own condition, before He heals his bodily infirmity, before He even makes a sign or intimates a purpose that will lead them to hope that their prayer will be answered – He strikes at the cause which His unerring gaze detects beneath the outward symptoms of bodily weakness, and seeks to remove that and its irritating influences by His gift of pardon and peace. There is no word of rebuke, no open disclosure of the man's sin before the eyes of the gaping crowd, not even a whispered suggestion of the secret to his friends – there is no record that He proved to the man *himself* that the character of his sin was known to Him – He simply tendered the service that He knew, whether the suppliant wanted it or not, was the one thing above all others that he needed, and without which the complete satisfaction of his wants would be utterly inadequate to do for him what Jesus Himself desired – the cleansing and emancipation of the man's life from all that might mar or hinder in the future the perfect fulfilment of his destiny and blessedness.

There is a world of significance in those first words – "Son," it is the assurance of *love*; "Be of good cheer," it is the promise of future *joy*; "thy sins be forgiven thee," it is the benediction of *peace*. If He had said nothing more, spoken no further word of physical healing, left him to spend the rest of his days a helpless paralytic – those three words held in them enough to make his life a psalm of praise and thanksgiving. And without them the miracle of healing, which followed close upon the words of "love, joy, peace," would have been as naught to satisfy the heart of his deepest needs. It is the supreme gift of healing, that the Master gave, the gift to the soul of the precious balms of love, joy and peace. Nothing can take their place in the cure of the soul, no merely physical cure is worth aught without their application first. And having them, all other pains are endurable. Even the Hindu religionist had learned that when he writes, "He becometh acquainted with that boundless pleasure which is far more worthy of the understanding than that which ariseth from the *sense*, depending upon which the mind moveth not from its principles; which having obtained, he respecteth no other acquisition, so great is it; in which depending, he is not moved by the severest pain." How much more the saint who wrote, "When persecuted my soul is then so mistress of itself that it seems that it is in its kingdom and has everything under its feet": or the young officer who wrote

on his tablets before the cancer choked him, “These have been the happiest months I ever spent in my life.”

I have given you here through the medium of this miracle of the healing of the paralytic, which falls into the background in its insignificance in the light of the greater power which He exercised – to forgive sins – what seems to be the Master’s and the Gospel’s diagnosis, not of all disease or affliction, but certainly of the chief pain of human maladies. It is the same note that rings out in St. Paul’s funeral dirge in the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, when he cries, “The sting of death is sin!” And it finds its echo in every experience, which suffering finds its keenest pain not in the consequences of wrongdoing which have been visited upon the body, but in the sin itself which rankles and burns beneath the outward wounds which it has made. Heal the wound if you can, cover the scar in silken garments, but the searing evil which caused it, if it be not removed, burns there still. There is no cure that brings with it the comfort and rest of the soul, but the cure of Jesus – which He offers to every sin-pierced life, the forgiveness of sin and the peace of pardon that comes in its wake. You know that, my friend, if you have been sinning, and have hidden your sin under the garb of outward respectability and religious conformity.

You believed once that if only you could get rid of the consequences of your sin – in the shape of broken health, a diseased body, a broken reputation – you would be happy. You hoped that when others had forgotten your sin, or human charity had drawn a veil over it, you would forget it too. You trusted that Time, that blessed healer of wounds, would wipe out not only the scars, but their pain. But while in the rush of duty, and the pressure of life’s cares, you may forget at times, the old pain is still there, the sting is still sharp when awakened memory presses hard upon the place where the old wound was, and the quick rush of accusing thoughts, like the rush of blood to an old sore, still tells you that your perfect cure is still to be wrought by more skillful touch than the charity of friends, than Time’s oblivion, or Life’s pressing duties.

You need the assurance of God’s love, the bestowment of His joy, the benison of His peace that passeth all understanding. And you will never get it perfectly until you bring your sin and lay it at His feet, and let Him heal it with His pardon. Stop denying it to your own heart, leave off refusing to bring it to Christ, humble yourself in confession before Him, seek to make that amends which He requires of those who would perfect His work in

their hearts. Let him whom Christ has left as His representative in His Church, your minister, offer his willing aid in prayer and counsel and sympathy, and send you away perhaps with a lighter heart and a freer conscience, following you with his help, or at least with his benediction of peace, and his and your Master's admonition, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

## IX – The Restored Demoniac

"And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'" – Mark 5:18–19.

THE next example of our Lord's treatment of individuals presents itself in chronological turn to round out the pair of examples which we have just been studying, and converts the pair into a trio. We see at once that this last example of the restored demoniac of Gadara was needed in the scheme of Christ's ministry of the cure of souls to complete His diagnoses of that variety of spiritual ills that affect also directly the mind and body by their devastating and debilitating ravages. The forces of evil reach the climax of their powers to mar and ruin the life of man in this case of the demoniac. The mind is gone, the body is bruised and torn, the spirits of the good have given place to the devils of evil, which now cry out of the inner dwelling places of the spiritual nature of the man, as though they were the sole occupants of the soul's temple, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not."

In this man are both the exciting causes that we found to be the ruin of the two lives which we have just been studying – the weakened will – weakened, dethroned, until it has lost the power even to assert itself at the call of Jesus; and the sin which has usurped the inner citadel of the man's nature, and has fortified itself impregnably behind the armed forces of the Evil One himself, which have added their strength to the other ills which beset the spiritual natures of the impotent man and the paralytic. It was sin at its worst with which Jesus had to deal here; every ravage which sin can accomplish in human life had been accomplished here. Well might the restored demoniac, freed from his possession by the powers of evil, healed

of his bodily hurts, clothed and in his right mind, his spiritual powers enthroned and dominant once more – have lifted up a paean of praise:

The powers of death have done their worst,

But Christ their legions hath dispersed;

Let shout of holy joy outburst!

Alleluia!

There is no record, however, of any such outburst of joy from the man restored, no intimation that, as with a lame man who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in after days, and was healed by Peter and John, he leaped and walked and praised God. The attitude in which those who came out of the city to test the reality of the miracle found him was one of subdued quiet; they found “him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, *sitting*, and clothed, and in his right mind.” It would seem that instead of being gladly exultant, eagerly confident in his newfound sanity and vigor, he was cowed, frightened, nervously expectant that the powers of evil so lately cast out from his nature by a miracle of Divine intervention would return again, and once more with the departure of his newfound benefactor and protector, enter in and take possession of his life. And for that reason it has been rightly conjectured, I think, he prayed Jesus, as He was leaving by ship, that he might be with Him.

And here we get a new phase of our Lord’s treatment, – His after treatment of those whom He had healed of their sicknesses or infirmities, to whom He had given forgiveness of their sins with its accompanying guerdon of the comforting sense of pardon and peace, whom He had put in possession once more of their powers and faculties of body and mind and spirit. The man before us was well of his illness, he was not strong as yet in the use of his powers. He had still to “work out his salvation,” and his first step he found to be only possible “with fear and trembling”. He was still convalescent. His will was flabby, his faith gasped under exertion, his purpose was as uncertain as the first steps of one rising for the first time from a bed of prolonged illness. He felt the need of a supporting arm, and at least the occasional word of counsel from the physician who had snatched him from the jaws of death, and to whom he still clung with the tenacity of the sick man, not yet vested with the fearless confidence and self-reliance of robust health. That, I think, is a fair analysis of the man’s state of mind at this stage of his cure.

We turn at once from this rapid review of the patient's felt needs to Jesus' treatment of them. "Howbeit," we read, "Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.'"

There are at least two things that Jesus must have had in mind when He gave His newfound disciple this direction: the one was the best provision for the real needs of His patient, and the other the best provision for the demands of His practice. Both provisions were important, as important to Jesus from the standpoint of the physician, as to the man whom He had treated. For aside from the tender solicitude which He showed for the best interests of every individual who came to Him in the exercise of His ministry for the salvation of men, the sagacious policy of the physician would have forbidden His dismissal of His patient if there were any reasonable danger of a return to his former condition. The best testimony to a physician's skill is not only the recovery, but the permanency of the recovery of his patients. Reinfection, to use the modern surgical term, at least arouses the suspicion of the incompetency or carelessness of the surgeon. Jesus sent the restored demoniac away because He knew that his restoration to spiritual health was permanent if he followed His directions. But more than that – for His interest in the welfare of every single soul was as great as His interest in the salvation of the whole race – He sent the man away because that was the best thing for him.

What the man needed most was the exercise of his newly restored powers. His will needed use, his faith required exercise, his purpose needed to be formed and consecrated. He needed someone to lean on him, more than he needed someone to lean on. The surest way to keep out the "unclean devils" with which he had been lately possessed, was to make the doors of his soul's temple strong against their return by exercise through works of loving service fit for one who had offered himself a new disciple to his newfound Lord and Master. They could only come back through doors left open by carelessness and indifference to the claims of the high calling which Jesus had given him, when He bade him, "Go home and tell thy friends how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

And that is the secret of all abiding strength and prevailing grace in the newly cleansed life. Demosthenes said when asked the secret of true and effective oratory – "There are three rules: the first is Action! and the second

is Action! and the third is Action!” It is as true of the secret of successful spiritual life – Exercise, Exercise, Exercise! Get something to do for Jesus’ sake, and do it! You have known the ruinous power of sin in some of its forms; you have been freed from its overpowering rule, – tell others “how great things the Lord hath done for *thee*, and hath had compassion on thee.” “Go home to thy friends, and tell them.” If the Christian life is worth anything to you, if it has brought you any blessing, made you any stronger, kept you from falling, brought you love and joy and peace; if it helps you to perform the duties of life better, sends you on your way each day with a lighter heart and freer conscience, comforts you in the hour of sorrow, sanctifies to you your deepest distress, purifies your earthly joys, makes life more worth living and gives you clearer vision of a heavenly home beyond – tell others about it. Let it shine on your face, let it show in your conduct, let it shout from your life. Make it known by your sweeter self-denial in your home; make it felt by your deeper self-consecration among your friends; make it believed by your nobler walk among your unbelieving associates. Do it, if for no other reason, for your own sake. You can never hope to lead a safe life without the exercise of the vital faculties of that life in the world in which God has placed you – not to run away nor to lean wholly on the strength of others, but to stay where He has sent you and put you, that you “may stretch out a loving hand to wrestlers with the troubled sea.”

And these words bring me to the second purpose to which I alluded, as having influenced Jesus to send the restored demoniac back to his home and friends. It was the only way He had of having His gospel of “good news” published abroad: it is the only way He has ever had. Those whom “He made disciples, He also made apostles,” we read in the Gospel. We read in the Old Testament with that anthropomorphism to which the writers needed to resort in order to carry their meaning, that God had hands and feet and eyes and ears. But God is a Spirit: He is without the functions of the material and physical body. Jesus had them; but Jesus has gone hence, and left us to do His will and work. You and I and all who name His name are God’s, are Christ’s, hands and feet and eyes and ears. Oh, for His sake who loved you, and washed you from your sins in His own blood, and hath made you kings and priests before God, let your hands be busy hands, and your feet hurrying feet, your eyes bright to catch each gleam through the clouds that envelop life, and your ears quick to hear every note that tells of

hope or victory in the fight with sin, that you may publish abroad as far as the little circle of your life's influence will let you, the glad tidings of "how great things the Lord hath done for you and hath had compassion on you!"

## X – Philip

"When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?'" – John 6:5.

We come now, in the course of our study of our Lord's treatment of individuals, to a different class of spiritual disorders from those which up to this time have engaged our attention. Hitherto the suppliants for His mercy, the patients, the method of whose treatment we have been trying to apply to our own needs, have been almost wholly those who have been conscious of their ills – individuals whose ailments have been read and known of all men, whose weaknesses and diseases, bodily, mental and spiritual, have, cried aloud for relief. But now we take up the methods of Jesus in dealing with those who are unconscious of their needs; whose troubles, though organic, are unappreciated by the individual himself until they are revealed to him by the skillful diagnosis of the physician.

Such an one was Philip. His weakness was one of defective spiritual vision. Myopia, they call it, when it is the physical eye which is affected – nearsightedness. Left without the knowledge of the larger world that lies beyond the narrow range of defective vision, the individual might live out his days and never be conscious of the existence of such a world, save as it came within the scope of his experience.

I remember being told by a friend some years ago that the fitting of glasses to his eyes changed the whole aspect of nature to him. He had been a sufferer from astigmatism, and never knew it. He told me he thought that the stars were lines of light, instead of single points as they seem to those of normal vision. And that he learned for the first time, when he placed his glasses on his eyes, their real appearance. And the same transformation of the appearance of things took place in his view of everything else. Given the possibility of his never comparing notes with others of normal vision, and he might have gone through life without ever having seen the visible world as it is.

Philip was such a person in the realm of spiritual vision. There was a vast world of spiritual realities and possibilities to which he seemed to be perfectly blind, or which he only dimly perceived and in distorted shapes. He was spiritually nearsighted, with some astigmatism. He measured spiritual possibilities by what he saw of material resources. The eyes of his faith had not been opened: he saw only what lay at his feet: the rest was at best blurred and indistinct. While the value, which he set upon the material, was out of all proportion to the appreciation which he put upon the spiritual. And Jesus knew this of His disciple. He recognized Philip's slavery to his appreciation of visible resources to accomplish material results. He knew just what Philip would answer to His question, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" And He asked the question, we are told, to prove Philip, and in the light of His after miracle to show him his defect, and reveal to him the larger spiritual possibilities of life after its material resources are exhausted.

You must recognize the kind of man that Philip was within the range of your own association or observation. He is the sort of man, who in response to the question, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" may invariably be expected to answer with Philip, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little – casting his eyes around at the same time to see where even so small an amount may be procured in the wilderness. His attention is divided between the greatness of the multitude to be fed, and the barrenness of the wilderness from which materials are to be obtained. He has no thought of any other means of supply. And the problem which has already perplexed him, and which the question of Jesus only complicates, finds as its only answer an utter helplessness and hopelessness of solution.

If asked to describe himself, such a man would doubtless do so by telling you that he is a practical man. That he believes what he sees. That he measures his abilities by the extent of his resources. That no man has a right to undertake more than he knows he can perform; by which he means, of course, than he knows he can perform with the forces and materials in sight. He believes in sitting down and counting the cost before one begins to build, and then adapting the size of his building to the exact amount of his estimated material and ability.

And the principle upon which such a man works is all right: it has good Scriptural authority; indeed in one of His parables our Lord bids men

to follow just that line of procedure. But the factor which he leaves out of consideration in his estimate of his resources, is, all that illimitable power upon which Jesus constantly and unfailingly drew, which lies within the sphere of the spiritual, and which is always open for use by those who are conscious of its presence, who have eyes of faith to perceive it, and who have faith to use it when once it is made known to them. And that was just where Philip was lacking, without being aware of it. But Jesus knew it; and asked His question of Philip “to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do.”

And Philip seems to have been aroused to a sense of his defective vision to the extent of being made conscious of it, and the presence of the spiritual outside of the bounds of his sight. Again, near the close of his discipleship, he makes a request closely akin to that which is implied in his doubt of human ability to meet the needs of the multitudes in the wilderness, when he cries, “Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us!” Conscious of his own nearsightedness, he peers into the distant realms of the spiritual of which also he has been made conscious, and asks for a manifestation of the unseen Father. And again he needs to have his gaze brought back to the present and abiding reality by the words of Jesus, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father. How sayest thou then, ‘Show us the Father’?”

We have all met this type of man in our associations. He is to be found in every walk of life. He is the man in the Church, on the vestry perhaps, who wants to know just where the means are to come from, or perhaps even to have them in hand, before he will consent to any endeavor looking to the improvement of facilities, or an enlargement of the field of the Church’s service. He is easily depressed by difficult circumstances, and as easily turned aside from any effort to overcome them unless he can be shown just how and where the resources are to be gotten to meet every exigency. A man of daring enterprise in business affairs, he leaves all of his spirit of aggressive and farseeing and resourceful enterprise behind him when he enters the doors of the Church’s sphere of activity, and seems to forget that man’s necessity is God’s opportunity, and that the exercise of faith begins where sight ends. No vision of unseen spiritual helpers gladdens his vision; only blank darkness meets his gaze, where for the men of spiritual vision the mountain of difficulty is “full of horses and chariots

of fire”. Like the servant of Elijah, he sees only the “horses and chariots and great host” which surround him to accomplish the destruction of his plans.

He is to be found in the larger social and civic relationships of life. He sees only the distressing conditions brought about by poverty, ignorance or vice, under which men are forced to live, to alleviate which he discerns no adequate means. The spiritual forces and powers which are at the disposal of those who are willing, and know how, to use them, are uncounted factors in the warfare with sin and want and misery.

He is known as the man who invariably offers his doubts as to the redemption of the individual who, a victim of dissipation or moral weakness, seems to be possessed of no inherent powers to raise himself; and who seems to respond but feebly to the efforts which others make to help him in his struggle with evil. To such an one the morally degraded is a hopeless case. Calling himself a Christian, as he does, a professed disciple of Jesus Christ, who “came to seek and to save the lost,” and who counts among His redeemed a countless host of those who have been snatched as brands from the burning, he is blind to these instances of the lives which have been changed by the Master’s touch; “of the publicans and Pharisees who have become apostles; of the Magdalenes who have been made queens and mothers in His Israel; of the dregs of the streets from which He has raised up a host of sons to Abraham; of those from the ranks of skepticism and anti-Christian hate from which the Lord Christ has won new champions and captains for His cause”; of the “sin-sick and sorrow-worn” whom the great Physician has healed of their spiritual diseases; of the “dead in trespasses and sin” whom He has raised up and made to sit with Him in heavenly places. Like Philip, this class have never gotten beyond the attitude with which he began his discipleship, when he said to Nathaniel, “Come and *see!* – seeming to intimate in the light of his after-discipleship, that Nathaniel would only be called upon to accept such evidences as came within the range of practical experience.

And to all such, Jesus offers the cure, having revealed the defect – the correction of your vision, the granting of His secret of farsighted vision to those of you who can only see what lies at your feet. Open your eyes and see the larger spiritual resources which He has placed at your disposal. Admit the power which He has to make bread in the wilderness, if only there is placed in His hands “the few small loaves and fishes,” coupled with the faith of those who bring them to Him. Bread sufficient for your hunger,

strength sufficient for your weakness, grace sufficient for your every need, is yours and to spare, if you have faith sufficient to grasp the opportunity.

## XI – Bartimaeus

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’” – Mark 10: 51.

IT might be said of the question of Jesus to Bartimaeus, as St. John said of His question to Philip – “This He said to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” The case of Bartimaeus is a contrast to, rather than a parallel with, that of Philip. Philip’s physical eyesight was perfect, while Bartimaeus was blind. But Philip’s spiritual vision was defective, while Bartimaeus proves that in this respect his vision was above the normal. My meaning is at first thought, I know, obscure; nor will it be plain without comparison with the incident which is recorded immediately in advance of the one here related.

I refer to the request of the two disciples who stood nearest to Jesus, James and John, who came to Him saying, “Master, we would that Thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.” To whom Jesus answered, “What would ye that I should do *for* you?” And then follows the rather presumptuous request, “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left hand, in Thy glory.” It was a request for outward pomp and glory; and the conception of the greatest human good, which it shows as that of these two disciples, was of perfection of *environment*. It is the most common conception of the way in which the highest human good is to be realized. It controls the minds of men in their schemes for the betterment of social conditions – better conditions, more favorable circumstances, healthier atmosphere, for the growth and development of institutions and individuals – something done *for* society. It is no less the commonest plea of the individual for himself. What he asks is the improvement of his external circumstances. “Give me better conditions,” he cries; “give me wealth, position, power, refinement; lift me above my fellows in point of opportunity and prestige; set me upon a throne of superior advantages; do something *for* me!”

And then, on the other hand, here is a blind, wayside beggar. He is wretchedly poor, dependent upon the scanty alms of those who occasionally dropped a coin into his outstretched palm. If ever a man needed the betterment of his external circumstances, here was one. Not even the

certainty of a daily crust was his; he belonged to almost the lowest class of society; the criminal classes even were more independent than he: he was a *beggar*. If James and John, the favored disciples of Jesus, had claims upon His beneficence for the external betterment of their conditions, because of their poverty of circumstance, then infinitely more so did the blind beggar, Bartimaeus. And yet when his chance came through the question of Jesus – to whose side he had forced his way – “What wilt thou that I should do *unto* thee?” the man casts everything else behind him with his discarded cloak, and cries, “Lord, that I may receive my sight!” Perfection of environment is all very well: it is necessary for the perfect realization of an ideal existence, a thoroughly useful life; but what is a perfect environment with a defective *organism*, of what use is an ideal arrangement of one’s circumstances if one lacks the powers to use them, how can one enjoy the external blessings and goods of life, if one is blind ?

Jesus asks His question in both instances with intention. He asks the disciples, “What would ye that I should do *for* you?” because He knows that they are still under the delusion, as yet uncorrected by their association with Him, that “circumstances make the man.” He asks Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, “What wilt thou that I should do *unto* thee?” because He desires to confirm the thought that He knows already to be in his mind, as evidenced by the undismayed eagerness of the beggar to get to Him, that circumstances will do little for the man, unless the man is first fitted to use them, and that then the man may even make the circumstances. He asks His question then, knowing perfectly the wants of Bartimaeus, not to discourage but to encourage him in his quest of the highest good that can come to him, a blind man, by receiving his sight, by the perfection of his *organism*.

I have treated the subject of what seems to be a simple instance of our Lord’s treatment of a blind beggar, somewhat philosophically, because the contrast stands out so vividly between these two conceptions of human perfection – through environment and through organism. I think you must see that such conclusions as I have drawn are warranted. Let us come now to the practical application of the principles involved to our own needs.

Almost the commonest complaint that you hear from the lips of the average man and woman is that they are what they are because of the poverty or adversity of their circumstances. They would have you believe that if only they could be lifted out of the hard conditions under which they are forced to live, their whole conduct and character would undergo a

complete transformation. That living as they do, or where they do, under the constant pressure of trial and temptation, it is impossible for anyone to realize the sort of conduct or produce the sort of character that is supposed to be expected of the Christian. If most of their time is spent in the pursuit of business, then it is the temptations of the business world that lead them astray from the high principles of honesty and fairness and truth; it is the demands of business that keep them from giving the time and attention to the spiritual duties of life, of worship and the Christian service of others, of prayer and the study of God's Word; it is business that crowds out the duties of the ministrant social life, that prevents the higher culture of the mind, that makes impossible the cultivation of the graces of the spiritual life, of courtesy and kindness and unselfishness.

If they happen to be women of the humbler walks in life, they tell you that the demands of the household, the care of children, the drudgery of daily service, the cramping effects of poverty, the coarsening effects of toil, make it impossible for them to pay any attention to the call of the spirit, to give any time to the cultivation of the soul's welfare, or even to keep them from being dragged down to the plane of a sordid and besotted materialism. But it is just as sure, if they belong to the favored classes of society in point of outward refinement and wealth, that if they are not living the sort of life or building the kind of character that a Christian should, they will tell you that their circumstances make them what they are; that it is utterly impossible for them to move in the worldly society their lot has cast them in, and breathe the worldly atmosphere of their set, without becoming like all the rest of the people of their acquaintance who spend their lives under the same conditions.

Or if they are the class in society who have fallen even below the plane of social respectability, and have given themselves over to vice, in the shape of drunkenness or licentiousness or dishonesty, they are just as ready with their excuses, and just as quick to lay the blame on their circumstances.

And in every case the cure which they seek is through the change of circumstance. If poor, their safety they believe is in becoming rich; if rich, they believe that their temptations would be infinitely less if they were poor. And so to the end of the category of what men believe to be the sort of circumstances that keeps them from being what they ought to be; or that failing to have they are unable to realize their ideals. "Change my

conditions!” they cry. “Put me where I can live as I ought to live. I acknowledge my faults and my sin is ever before me. Place me where I can get rid of it all!”

And that is just what religion does not promise to do. Christianity has no recipe for sanctification through change of environment. It calls men to stay where they are, and to work out their salvation there by helping others who have fallen in the strife to work out theirs. It calls you, if you are one of those who are deluding themselves with the belief that they only need a change in order to fulfill their ideals, to fasten yourself with a still stronger hold upon the world in which God has placed you; and instead of yielding to your selfish desire to save yourself by deserting others, to strengthen yourself with the knowledge that He who called you to be His disciple also made you His apostle. Remember His prayer for you – “I pray not that Thou wouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou wouldest keep them from the evil that is in the world.” And “quit you like men; be strong.”

And the way in which you are to be kept safe – do you ask that? The prayer that you have a right to pray, and must pray if you are to survive the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, is it not – instead of “Change my environment!” “Change *me*, change my organism, change my heart, change my nature? ‘Lord, that I might receive my sight!’ Grant unto me that I may see life in its right proportions; give me perspective, open my eyes to the truth, help me to look out upon life through Thy pure eyes. Give me strength to change my circumstances, and make them through the grace given me from Thee, what Thou wouldest have them to be. ‘Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!’”

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;  
Come quickly from above;  
Write Thy new Name upon my heart,  
Thy new, best name of Love.

## XII – The Syrophenician Woman

“But Jesus said unto her, ‘Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.’” – Mark 7:27.

AGAIN, it might be said, as of our Lord’s question to Philip, of these strange and almost harsh words to the Syrophenician woman – “This He said to prove her, for He Himself knew what He would do.” In no other way

can we explain His treatment of one who comes to Him in distress, pleading the relief of her daughter. That she was of the despised and accursed Canaanites, the nation that was looked upon as above all others reprobate of reprobates, is true. But whatever the prejudice of His own nation, there was no wall of partition high enough to shut out the appeals of human need and human misery from Him, whose chief designation among His enemies had come to be that He was “the friend of publicans and sinners”. If the defilement of sin then failed to cut men off from His sympathies and practical beneficence, but only drew Him nearer to the sinner; surely racial prejudice and religious sectarianism would never have been strong enough barriers to exclude such an one as this Canaanitish woman with her passionate plea for help. Indeed so far from being deterred by such barriers, moral or racial, the surest passport to His sympathies was the desperation of the case presented to Him. His was the heart, as well as the skill, of the great Physician.

And yet, when we turn once more to a review of the conditions accompanying this plea of the distressed mother, when we read the graphic description of how she followed Jesus up, crying, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, Thou son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil”; when we are told that “He answered her not a word,” and that His disciples with petty irritation besought Him, saying, “Send her away; for she crieth after us”; when we read that He Himself as though impatient of her continued cries, rebuked her importunity with the words, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” only to be met by a stronger appeal, as the woman threw herself at His feet, worshiping Him, and murmuring, “Lord help me!” – it is hard to understand the harshness of Jesus, to account for such sternness as scarcely ever characterized another utterance of His, as He makes the crushing rejoinder to her last act of worship and prayer in the words, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs.”

Yes, the explanation must be the one which I have offered – “This He said to prove her, for He Himself knew what He would do.” Here was an example of surpassing love and of rare faith, – the love of a mother for her child, the faith of a woman in her Physician. Can you express love and faith, raised to their highest powers, in much more graphic terms? And Jesus knew the extent of her faith and love; He knew they could not be discouraged; He wanted to test for Himself, and to exhibit to His disciples

the reaches of which the sort of faith and love to which all things were possible were capable. And so He puts her faith in the furnace, that its gold may shine the brighter, when in answer to her humble response to His harsh rebuke, “Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table” – He says, “O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.”

It is this answer which justifies all that went before: the harshness of Jesus is what the seemingly cruel operation of the surgeon, as seemingly regardless of the cries of pain he wields his keen-edged knife, is to the patient. He is cruel because he is kind: the resulting health justifies the pain he inflicts.

But there is a deeper reason for the treatment of the Syrophenician woman than that which I have suggested. The woman herself catches it at once, as is shown by her answer to the seeming taunt of Jesus. She does not dispute the relationship in which she knew her nation stood to the “chosen people” of God. She knew that she belonged to a nation that was counted as “dogs” by the Jews. She recognized the fact that she was a religious outcast in their eyes, and that from their standpoint she merited nothing but abuse and neglect. But she counted on the mercy of Jesus as greater than that of His nation. She believed that He had blessings enough in store to satisfy not only the wants of His own, but the needs of others less favored. Those who sat at the table spread by His bounty could feed upon its dainties: the crumbs that fell beneath it were enough for her needs – even the “dogs” could claim them as their share.

Do you see the application of our Lord’s treatment of the woman, and her faith in His powers, to your own needs? It is quite plain, if you study it closely, and it is this: that the blessings which the favored classes and individuals in society oftentimes set least store by, and which drop unheeded as crumbs from the overflowing tables which God’s love has spread for them, are often the means of support and blessing to those who by reason of their own fault or fortuitous circumstance have been denied a place among these favored beneficiaries.

The world at large revels in its enjoyment of wealth, of refinement, of culture, of position, of physical health, of intellectual enlightenment, and of material progress: the gifts of civilization are counted the paramount blessings of life, the *sine qua non* of all true happiness and advantage. The religious world counts as precious above pearls the advantages of religious

ceremonial, of sacramental grace, of a free Gospel, of spiritual enlightenment, of all the things that are the possession only of those who are as a Chosen People in their enjoyment of the full privileges of a Christian dispensation and an historic Church: these are the heritage of those who are the heirs of “the faith once delivered to the saints,” the richest inheritance that can come through churchly order and historic growth.

And yet, and yet – it often happens that those who “eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table,” – through the simple faith which they exercise in the power and willingness of Jesus to *save* in spite of their unworthiness, through the hold which they seize upon the spiritual meaning of His religion, through the satisfying comfort and contentment which they realize out of the life which is lived in close communion and fellowship with Him, – carry away a greater blessing and are surer of commendation from the Master Himself, than those who sit as honored guests or as spoiled children at His table.

We were talking in our last address of the importance which men set upon outward circumstance and favorable environment. Who has not seen it in the way men appreciate the advantages of civilization and the accidents of social refinement? Who has not felt it in the value which men put upon outward form and ceremonial in religion, in the excessive importance which they attach to rigid conformity to the “outward and visible sign” of sacraments, in the carefulness with which they guard churchly order and historic accuracy? And yet who, at the same time, has not seen the same men oftentimes carrying away the *husk*, while they leave behind the *kernel* of spiritual truth and saving grace? Who has not witnessed the pitiful spectacle of the Athenians – with their “exceeding religiousness” in material symbols and relics, and their altar “To the Unknown God” – repeated in his own observation and experience? Who of you favored children at the Master’s table is quite sure that though you “have the form of religion,” you are not “denying the power thereof”? While, who of you has not seen just as striking examples of contentment in the homes of the poor, on the bed of the sick and suffering, among those who have least of the so-called goods of life and most of its so-called ills? Who has not known those without the rare opportunities of churchly order and religious environment, whose faith is perhaps as rudimentary as that of the little child, whose prayers go up from the midst of a life of pain and deprivation; yet, who have experienced as

deep a consciousness of God's love, of His saving grace, and of fellowship with Him, as the most favored of those who sit at His table?

Truly, the dogs do eat of the crumbs that fall from the Master's table, and are satisfied! Would that some of us might occupy the place that they do, if only we might enjoy as rich a feast as they! Would that we might be smitten with as harsh an exhibition of His sternness as was this stricken woman, if only our faith might emerge from the trial as bright and serene above all disappointment as did hers! Would that He might subject us to a deeper and fuller self-denial of the things which now our souls crave of the husks and forms of things, if only at the end He might be able to say of us, "O man, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Surely you would not grudge the temporary deprivation, if back and behind it you could see the richer blessing which awaited you, would you? Do you complain sometimes of your poverty, my friend? Remember that it may be the needed discipline that shall shape your nature and character into some finer likeness of your Master than now is yours. Do you cry out against the providence that has sent you suffering or death as your portion in the home or in your own lot? Remember that no chisel like the chisel of pain or sorrow has so keen an edge for shaping human character into the image of life's great ideal, the Man Christ Jesus. Do you wonder why your life is so beset with sharp temptations, while others walk serenely undisturbed by such distracting cares and defiling allurements as threaten your peace and safety? Remember that He too "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"; and that "He is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape." And through it all, when you are tempted to feel that your place assigned has been *beneath* the table of His bounty, and not *at* it – remember that it is not because He loves you not, nor cares; "for whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every one whom He receiveth." But – He loves you still.

### XIII – The Man With the Demoniactal Son

"Jesus said unto him, 'If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth.'" – Mark 9:23.

IN this case of the man with the son who was possessed with a dumb spirit, whom Jesus found awaiting Him at the foot of the Mount of His Transfiguration, we are still dealing with a study of those who came to

Jesus in behalf of the ills of others. In this and the preceding case of the Syrophenician woman, the instrument through which He healed those afflicted was the faith of others. And in both cases that which interests us is not the nature or extent of the cure which He wrought upon the diseased mind and body of those brought to Him, but His method of dealing with those who brought them. The demented victims of demoniacal possession were beyond the possibility of intelligent response; but Jesus found the intelligent response in their sponsors – in the one case the mother, and in this last case the father of the possessed.

In the mother's case, as we have found, the faith needed was already hers – pleading, adoring, undismayed, and undiscourageable faith; but in the case of the father now under study, the faith was lacking, or at best it needed to be quickened into such vitality as would enable Jesus to use it for the cure sought. The most that the man was able to say in his appeal to Jesus was of the nature of a despairing cry for help – “If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us!” To which Jesus answered – not discouraging him as He had done the Syrophenician, but seeking to stimulate the feeble pulse of faith that He detected fluttering beneath his despair – repeating the first words of the man's own plea for help – “If *Thou canst!* All things are possible to him that *believeth.*”

It is not the character of the man's faith which here concerns Jesus, however much importance He may have laid upon faith's character or foundation at other times and in other connections: it is *vitality* which He needs now, which He must have. He is dealing with a desperate case; stimulants are the order of His treatment; nourishment and food and habits of life can come later, must be looked after in the future development and growth of the man's faith. But now the supreme thing is to quicken it into life, to make it capable of response to the work He has for it to do, to give it strength to lay hold upon His power, which is only waiting for its helping hand in the work there is for Divine power coupled with human faith to perform.

All this is contained, I believe, in the words of the man, which Jesus repeats. “If Thou canst do anything” – pleads the man, voicing his doubt and at the same time expressing his belief that if anything can be done it must be wholly by the exercise of some power which Jesus may possess. And Jesus retorts, using the same words – “If thou canst!” As though He would reply, “You think that the whole burden of the work to be performed

is to rest upon Me. You are mistaken. The chief burden of responsibility for success depends upon your faith. It is not wholly if I can; but rather, ‘if *thou* canst.’ I am powerless without the cooperation of your faith. In the absence of intelligent response from your afflicted son, your faith must be the outstretched hand upon which My power must lay hold in order to raise him up. But it must be a living hand, it must be a vital faith. My power can do anything with the aid of a faith that is vital, ‘all things are possible to him that believeth.’”

You must see that the faith which Jesus seeks to arouse, to stimulate into vigorous life and activity, is not what is commonly known as “The Faith,” it is not the faith contained in the creeds or expressed in theological formulas, it is not objective faith. It is rather the vital principle residing in man himself, moving him to effort, constraining him, compelling him to reach out and up after power, which working with him is able to accomplish the end desired; it is faith on its subjective side.

And with this proposition in your mind, you will be surprised, if you have only thought of faith as meaning the definite dependence of the soul upon God, to find in the numberless references to faith in the Bible, that in the majority of them, it is spoken of in this sense of a vitalizing force in man, without reference to its object as God, however much it may be true that God is implied as the source of all power. Listen to some of them: “According to your faith be it unto you”; “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, ‘Remove hence to yonder place,’ and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you”; “And He said unto them, ‘Where is your faith?’” “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”; “Without faith ye can do nothing”; “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.” It is the exception when an objective faith in God or Christ is spoken of specifically; as a rule Christ and the inspired writers seem to be striving to secure the emphasis upon the necessity of the presence of a vital force in the life of man himself. To believe, that is the thing. To believe in the possibility of the accomplishment of the thing you desire; to believe that it will be done even before it is undertaken; to believe that there are forces in *you*, whether native, born in you, or entering into you by some new birth or endowment, which cannot fail; to believe that there is an Almighty Power *above* you, but which is *not* above stooping to work *in* you, which can accomplish through you what perhaps you feel yourself powerless even to undertake without its

indwelling presence. And, if the sphere of your operations is in the moral and spiritual, as well as in the material world, to believe that there is an Almighty Power that supplements your human efforts, and is ready to accomplish what was His will even before it was your wish. This is to have faith as a vital principle, rather than as a mechanical formula: this it was that made the faith of a Roman soldier, of the Syrophenician woman, and when it was once aroused, the faith of the father of the demoniac boy, effective, though they each and all lacked the intelligent grasp of the object of their faith that the disciples of Jesus had; while the disciples, trained in the truth that Jesus taught, living in the atmosphere of His personality, believing in the truth of His Divinity, were powerless to work the physical cure and moral reformation which the vital faith of this untaught and untrained father accomplished through Christ.

And with this quality of faith nothing is impossible, “all things are possible” that are desirable of attainment. And this is the kind of faith that the world and Christ needs today in those who profess and call themselves Christians. “The Faith” of the Creeds held lightly, and professed almost as a part of the easygoing life system that has been inherited with a certain position in society, will never accomplish the works which Jesus did, and which He has left His Church to do in His Name. The call of the times is just as loud today as ever in the days of Apostles and martyrs, for men and women who will leave the realm of the easily possible in morals and service, and enter upon an effort after the seemingly impossible; for men who will stop saying that inflexible honesty in business, incorruptible purity in politics, unswerving sincerity in society, and wholehearted self-sacrifice in the Church, are impossible; for men and women who will attempt the scaling of the heights of the impossible, if these things are impossible. Who will no longer say, “I don’t believe you can apply the principles of the Sermon on the Mount to these spheres of human life”; because they can’t, so far as they are concerned, if they don’t believe they can. And certainly such an application is among the “all things that are possible to him that believeth,” if Christian men and women will only believe they are, and will put their faith into their accomplishment, and their heart into their application – at least as much faith and heart as they put into making money and seeking pleasure and all the other things they do have faith and heart in.

Such faith as I have been speaking of may be imperfect, it may be mixed with doubt, it may be obliged to begin with the prayer, which is also

a confession, “Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief”; but if what there is of it is genuine, if it is living, if it is the hand which is laid confidently into the Almighty Hand of Him who calls its possessor to work for Him, it is effective faith, and though but as a grain of mustard seed it will not fail.

Cultivate such faith, my friend. Cultivate it by using such faith as you have as the first step. It may be but a poor expression of “the faith” of the creeds to begin with, it may be obliged to say in halting tones, when it comes to rehearse the articles of its belief, “Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief”; but it will accomplish the end whereto it sets itself. And because it is vital, because it is living though it be but a germ, it will grow like all living things into the larger and fuller “Faith” by the sheer exercise of its powers. Don’t belittle creeds; but oh, whatever else you do, or leave undone, cultivate *faith*. Faith will make creeds, as the tree makes leaves; and, after all, creeds are very much like leaves, the sign of the tree’s life, just as creeds are the sign of the soul’s life. But faith is as the roots. A tree can live without leaves at times, but it can’t live without roots. Pray God to help you; get rid of your cynicism and skepticism; be a believer; have confidence in the success of everything that is worth doing. Hold fast your faith it alone is the inspiration of effort, the support in failure, the comforter in sorrow, the instrument in the hands of God and His Christ, the great Physician, for the healing of your every infirmity. “Be not afraid: only believe.” And –

“... cling to faith beyond the forms of Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring words,  
She brightens at the clash of ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’  
She sees the Best that glimmers through the Worst,  
She feels the sun is hid but for a night,  
She spies the summer through the winter bud,  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
She bears the lark within the songless egg,  
She finds the fountain where they wailed ‘Mirage’!”

#### XIV – The Rich Young Ruler

“Now when Jesus heard these things, He said unto him, ‘Yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’” – Luke 18:22.

OUR study brings us again to our Lord's treatment of those who came to Him for the relief or supply of their own defects. This time it is that of a certain rich young ruler. And in view of the sequel to the reception which he met with at Jesus' hands, it is well to note this unusual comment on the part of the Evangelist, St. Mark, "Then Jesus beholding him *loved* him." It is the only comment of this character recorded in the Gospels, save that by which His relationship with the brother of Mary and Martha is described, and that by which St. John describes his own relationship to Jesus, when he speaks of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It is a thorough justification of the necessity that Jesus felt Himself under in sending the young man away – that He did it against the dictates of His heart, in that "He loved him."

There was everything to draw Jesus to him – that a young man in the flower of his youth and enthusiasm, overcoming the pride of wealth and of rulership, should seek Him out, and running to Him, whom but few of the great recognized at all, should kneel to Him, calling Him "Master" and inquiring the way of eternal life. What could be lacking to win the loving admiration of Jesus? Or if aught else was lacking, what could it be that was not supplied by the further declaration of the young man that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up? Here was physical beauty, personal winsomeness, moral integrity, spiritual humility, to all appearance – what an opportunity to win the choicest of disciples! And yet the first word of Jesus to him, after rehearsing to him the articles of the moral law as containing the essence of eternal life, and receiving his answer, "All these have I observed from my youth," was "One thing thou lackest."

From the physiological standpoint, the case of the rich young ruler was one of *arrested development*. Now and then you see a dwarf, whose physical members are perfect; there is not a trace of deformity; the little man is everything that other men are, except that in stature, he is diminutive. At an early stage of his life he stopped growing, and though later possessing all the attributes and powers of mature manhood in other respects, he still has the growth of a child. His is a case of arrested development.

Something like that in the realm of the spiritual was true of the rich young ruler. He was singularly free from the deformities of sin; that portion of his development which lay in the period of moral growth and formation

was perfect: but he had stopped there; on the spiritual side of his nature he was still a dwarf.

Jesus indicates that to be his case, when He says, “Yet lackest thou one thing.” There is no denial of his claims to moral perfection; no drawing away from him because of any lack of personal attractiveness – on the contrary Jesus was drawn to him. “He loved him” for what he was. He simply tells him, what he seems to that point to have been unconscious of, that he is short of the stature of the truly spiritual man, and suggests the remedy. “Sell all that thou hast, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me”: as though He had said, “You are over-weighted; you can’t grow under the burden you are trying to carry; throw off the weights; let those who need them as wings have them in your stead; and you will grow upward towards your treasure. And then come and take your place among the full-statured men whom I have called to be My disciples.”

If you go back to a consideration of the literal requirements which Jesus laid upon the young man, you may say that His was a very radical treatment of a case that hardly justified such stringent measures, and that would certainly have yielded better returns in the way of discipleship if it had been dealt with more leniently. That, in view of the circumstances and the exemplary character of the young man and the personal magnetism that moved Jesus even to love him, He might have taken him as he was, riches and position and all, and either have used the prestige and power of his possessions to help on the cause, or else have weaned him from them gradually by showing him how impossible they were in such a ministry as His, and how inconsistent with the calling and aims of the new life. It is certainly probable that you would have made the treatment easier; it is hardly probable that the Church today would lay any such rigorous requirements upon such a character as that under study – it is more probable that the Church would glory in the acquisition of such an one to her membership. And still the fact remains, that Jesus did so command His would-be disciple, even though He must have known that it would mean his utter discouragement, and that as a result he would turn sorrowfully away.

The treatment of Jesus is based upon His knowledge of the case, as it always was. The internal conditions justified the remedy, however fair the external appearances were. The very fact that the young man “went away sorrowful *because* he had great possessions,” proves the wisdom of the

diagnosis of Jesus. There could have been no strong discipleship such as He called men to, if they loved their wealth or position better than they loved Him, or even better than they loved their work. The march upon which He led His army was a forced march; there could be no *impedimenta*. Light marching order was the order of the day – undivided devotion to their Captain. The rich young ruler was well on the road to the secret of a full-orbed, spiritual manhood, when in the midst of his plenty and prosperity and power he turned aside from them to ask of Christ – who was bereft of all the circumstances of wealth and prosperity, yet who bore in His person and countenance the marks of the great secret – “What lack I yet? What is it that I need that in spite of my life of easy circumstance and respectable propriety, I do not possess? Grant me the secret of supreme satisfaction for unsatisfied want.”

And the answer of Jesus contains the secret, though it may not lie on the surface. It is not primarily and essentially the renunciation of all earthly possessions, though that was what Jesus saw was needful for the rich young ruler. It may be that in the case of some, “great possessions” are not a retarding influence in the way of spiritual growth. It may even be that through it many find the ability to do the works of Christ, – in the relief of His little ones, in the opening up along the avenues of trade of the highways of a nobler civilization or a fuller evangelization of the world, in the cultivation of a spirit of unselfish service – it may be that you have found through it a way that leads you upward and nearer God: I am not engaging in a sweeping condemnation of wealth or prosperity or any of the other possessions of a temporal and material character. Nor do I think that the prevailing note of the Gospels is such a note of sweeping condemnation. Jesus was dealing with a specific case: He saw that the weights that were holding this young man down, and under which he could never rise to his full height, were his temporal possessions; and He prescribed for him accordingly. But, if you are sure that such possessions and occupations are not obstacles to your growth, then they are not the weights that you need throw off: only you can be the judge of that. If in them you find no barrier to a closer communion with God, no blind to the true realities of life, no weights on your upward growth into the light and life to which Jesus calls you, then truly the message contained in these words of Jesus to the rich young ruler for you is, “Keep them, and use them to the glory of God and

your own salvation. If they are wings, and not weights, use them to lift you higher.”

But mark you, that has not been the rule, and is not today, as regards society as a whole, or even, apparently as regards the average individual. Times of exceptional material prosperity have been invariably times of spiritual deadness and indifference. Not of outrageous wickedness necessarily, nor of gross immorality; though the drift has been invariably in that direction. Perhaps not of meager beneficence; very often it is the other way – of prodigal generosity. But times nevertheless of indifference to the higher claims of the religious life. And Jesus says to such an age, “You lack proportion. You are putting first what belongs last. You are confounding the greater glory with the glory of perishing structures, instead of seeing with undimmed vision that the greater glory is the glory of spiritual character, of full-orbed manhood. If you are going to forget God, if you cannot keep close to Christ in any other way, it were better that all of your possessions be cast away or given to those who will make better use of them, than that you should fail to attain the last cubit of Christlike stature. What shall it profit an age to gain the whole world and lose its own soul?”

Is this less true of the individual? Is not the call of Jesus also to him, to sacrifice anything and everything rather than lose his own soul, rather than stop short in the way of spiritual development, and fail of attaining the complete measure of spiritual manhood?

This is the call to you, whoever you may be, who are letting some fancied good stand in the way of your larger growth – no matter what it is, if it is a weight, cast it away. It is not worth your while. It is keeping you away from Christ: cut it off. Pray for strength to make any sacrifice He requires of you for your greatest good, for your largest growth. Pray that you may have your cold sense of duty warmed into a glowing love for Him, who as He looks upon you even in your weakness – *loves* you. Pray that you may not turn away sorrowful with the rich young ruler, because of any possessions that you may count great; but that when His tender question comes to you today, through the voice of your heart or your conscience, as it came of old to Simon upon the shores of Galilee from the lips of Jesus – “Lovest thou *Me* more than *these*?” you may gladly answer, “Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love *Thee*!”

## XV – Zacchaeus

“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said unto him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down: for today I must abide at thy house.’” – Luke 19:5.

THE story of Zacchaeus, the publican, is a contrast in almost every particular to that of the Rich Young Ruler. Unlike that young man, he was dwarfed in physical stature, he must have possessed few charms of manner and person, he was a member of the most despised class in Palestine, the publican – deputy collectors for the hated Roman government, extortionate oppressors of the people – he was doubtless accused of having broken every law in the Decalogue, he was hated by every patriotic Jew. And where the contrast in physical attractiveness and personal reputation ends, that which these figures present in moral and spiritual character seems to begin, and to be just as striking. Zacchaeus towers above the crowd, here – the eagerness which led him to climb into a tree in order to see Jesus fitly symbolizes the exalted character of his aspirations and his scrupulous performance of justice and duty. I believe Frederick W. Robertson’s interpretation of Zacchaeus’ later words to Jesus – “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I *give* to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I *restore* him fourfold” – that they are the enunciation of the rule which had always governed Zacchaeus’ conduct of his relations with men, is the true interpretation. The response of Jesus to this profession of a desire to deal with generous beneficence and scrupulous justice and honesty seems to confirm the interpretation. He says, “This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he *also is* a son of Abraham: “the present, and not the future tense, is used in both cases – Zacchaeus’ profession and Jesus’ commendation. The case of Zacchaeus is that of a man whose character is better than his *reputation*; just as that of the rich young ruler was that of one whose *reputation* is stronger than his *character*. The spiritual nature of Zacchaeus had grown under its weights – the heavy burdens of a disreputable calling, of opportunities for extortion which he turned into opportunities for unswerving honesty, of large accumulations of wealth which furnished him the means for generous beneficence to the poor by converting the Jewish requirement of a *tithe* of one’s income into the willing appropriation of a *half* of all his goods, of a bad name which he made worthy of being linked in the mind of Jesus with that of the Father of the Faithful. He had turned his *weights* into *wings*.

And Jesus saw what everybody else seems to have been blind to – they said of Him as He went a self-invited guest to the house of Zacchaeus, “that He was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner” – that here was a good man, in spite of crushing discouragements, in spite of oppressing weights; that here was a man who measured up to the full height of a spiritual manhood, and deserved His sympathy and recognition as a man. And He gave it to him: He who but lately might have dined in the palace of a ruler of the people, and numbered him among His followers, but though He loved him, had turned away from the opportunity because He saw him to be unfit to be His disciple, now lifts His eyes to a despised publican, and bids Himself unmasked to his house, because, though all men hated him, He saw him to be worthy to be the host.

Nothing that is recorded of the treatment Jesus ministered to those who came within the sphere of His influence, presents a more striking proof of His unerring diagnosis of human character and human need, than does His action in these two cases of the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. You or I doubtless would have claimed the one as our disciple on his own terms; and have as surely passed by the other with the contempt that his reputation deserved. Jesus risked His reputation as a judge of men by turning the one away; and ruined His reputation as a fit associate of respectable people by inviting Himself to be the guest of the other. He let the one go away sorrowful, because he merited His condemnation: He sought out the other because he deserved and needed His sympathy. Then, men murmured at His folly: today, we praise His wisdom.

Nothing is more unreliable than reputation; and yet nothing is harder to overcome. It is a true, if homely, proverb: “Give a dog a bad name, and you had just as well hang him.” Zacchaeus was suffering from a bad reputation, and it was Jesus’ business and desire to lift the quarantine. The moral isolation of the man was likely to ruin his character. The wonder is that he did not become as bad as the reputation men had given him made him out to be. Isolate a man among lepers and though he be a well man he becomes a leper, nine times out of ten. Jesus saved Zacchaeus from the danger of possible moral infection by strengthening the springs of his health: He strove to prove to his community Zacchaeus’ freedom from infection by associating with him. Nothing that He could have done would have been more effective in its influence upon the minds of right-thinking

and right-feeling people in restoring Zacchaeus to the companionship of his fellows, than this simple device of treating him as an equal.

What a light this act of Jesus throws upon the mission and method of Christianity in dealing with those who are to all intents and purposes, so far as society at large is concerned – lost! Lost, by reason of a bad reputation, which they have made for themselves and deserve, but which they have not strength to overcome or rise above by amendment: lost, as really by reason of a bad reputation, which others have given them and which they do not deserve, but by which they are dragged down to the level of those with whom society has numbered them. It is both classes to which the saving mission of Jesus and Christianity is applied by the words of Jesus Himself – “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And His method was always the same, wherever He detected signs of a desire for change: whether it was a woman that was a sinner, who washed His feet with the tears of her penitence and wiped them with her hair – the victim of her own sin; or a publican whom society had ostracized and expected to see Jesus condemn – the victim of the unjust judgments of others. In both cases it is not condemnation of the sins of the one, nor confirmation of the reputation of the other, that He brings; but divine sympathy, human recognition, brotherly love, that He pours as healing balms into the open wounds of their shame or sensitiveness. And thus those whom society and formal religion had declared hopeless incurables, He heals by His sympathy.

That’s Christianity. The law and its institutions are necessary for the protection of society and the punishment of the offender; but neither has power to save the sinner. He is but driven deeper into crime, or becomes a more ready victim of despair through their influence. Only love can cure him: only the tender touch of the wise physician can heal his diseases, or restore his wounded spirit. Try it in your dealings with such; if it fails, it is certain that nothing else will succeed. Try it in your dealings with those who like Zacchaeus are resting under the burden of false accusation, or ruinous suspicion. Try it in your associations with those who are suffering from the unkindnesses of others, maybe, who are sensitively alive to fancied wrongs, that have not been intended. Disarm their sensitiveness by your overgenerous sympathy and association, if it is necessary. They need a little sunshine; give it to them. There are as many people in the world suffering from fancied wrongs almost, as there are those who have been

really wronged. And a sore imagination, after all, is capable of as much pain as a sore heart. It will not do altogether to say that such people have no right to be offended or sensitive: the fact remains that they are, and that therefore they need help. It will not do to confine your loving ministries wholly to those whom you know to be in actual need of your sympathy; there are others also who *think* they need sympathy. Grant it to them, or by your own kindly associations dispel their sense of need. Recreate their trust in themselves by your trust in them. Restore the confidence of others in their integrity, by the confidence which you manifest in them. They may be faint hearts, timid spirits, weak wills – *lost* in the fierce struggle of the world for existence, for place, for recognition; but even if they are, and because they are, and because you may be strong, and are able to make your own way without wilting under the glare and heat of unfriendly criticism or unsympathetic association – put your strong shoulder under their burden and help them to carry it a little way, until they get strength and courage to take it up again.

How many a soul if it voiced its own feeling would find utterance in some such words as these of Mrs. Margaret Preston:

What use for the rope if it be not flung  
Till the swimmer's grasp to the rock has clung?  
What help in a comrade's bugle blast  
When the peril of Alpine heights is past?  
What need that the spurring paeon roll  
When the runner is safe beyond the goal?  
What worth is eulogy's blandest breath  
When whispered in ears that are hushed in death?  
No, no! If you have but a word of cheer,  
Speak it while I am alive to hear.

## XVI – Mary and Martha

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was. – John 11:5–6.

THE case of Mary and Martha here presented to us is the case of those whose faith has been disappointed. And the disappointment is the sorest that ever comes to men – the disappointment of those who have based their faith upon the love of another, whose love for them they have

believed unailing and inexhaustible. The Evangelist St. John's record, "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus," is the utterance of what was common knowledge. Everybody knew that this family held an especially dear place in Jesus' affections. Their home was His most frequent resort. It was there He withdrew to rest. The hospitality of this Bethany home was one of the cherished privileges of His ministry; and it was always open to Him. What could be stranger then, than that when the breathless messenger came to Him with his agonized plea for help, which, while asking nothing, asked everything that they wanted in their dire need – "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick" – it should be recorded of Him that "when He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days *still* in the *same* place where He was"? There is criticism in the very wording of the evangelist's account; as though even in after years, when the reason for His strange delay was perfectly clear to him, John was voicing the feeling of wonder with which the disciples of Jesus watched Him as day was added to day, and still He whose ears were always open to the cry of need from the meanest and humblest of His suppliants showed no sign of answering the cry for help from the distressed sisters of His *beloved* friend Lazarus.

And if this was the feeling of the disciples, what must have been that of Mary and Martha? Dawson has given us a graphic description of those days of pained waiting from their viewpoint: "Both sisters share the futile and inexpressibly painful conviction that, if Jesus had been there, Lazarus had not died. They cannot understand His strange delay. They supposed that the moment He had heard of the sickness of His friend He would have hastened to his couch; for they knew Him well enough to know that He would scorn danger at the call of love. They wait in vain, scanning with tearful eyes the long road that winds downward from Bethany to Jericho and the distant fords of Jordan. Their messenger returns with not so much as a hopeful word from Jesus. Mary, crushed and broken-spirited, watches in the cool of the eve from the palm-clad slopes of Bethany for the Friend who does not come. At last the morning breaks when all is over. The gray light falls upon the rigid face of Lazarus. The irretrievable calamity has come. There is nothing left but the last sad rites, the long farewells; and then the dead man, on his open bier, is carried to his tomb, and the stone is rolled across the doorway. All thought of help from Jesus is now at an end. They can only think of Him with the tender, sad resentment of women

disappointed in their hero. They, no more than the disciples, have the least thought that all this bitterness of loss and of delay is but the darkened stage on which will enter, at His own hour, the Prince of Life.”

We pause here to ponder for a moment upon the strange conflict of emotions that must have surged within the breasts of His disciples as the result of the unexpected and inexplicable treatment of those who came under the notice of Jesus about this time. The rich young ruler, with all the claims he possessed upon the favorable consideration of Jesus, whom He allowed to go sorrowfully away; Zacchaeus the publican, despised of men, whom He treats as an equal and whose hospitality He invites; Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus, whose plea for help He seems to treat with stoical indifference; and later His approval of the seemingly wasteful expenditure of a large sum of money, that might have been expended for the relief of the poor, for the elusive sentiment and passing pleasure of the moment. To the disciples, whose discernment could not pierce beneath the outward appearance, and who knew but little, if anything, of the real needs of those who came to Jesus, who possessed no powers of searching diagnosis, His movements must have been followed with ever-increasing perplexity.

And even now, with all the light which the resulting effects of His strange behavior has thrown upon the wisdom of that treatment, it is hard for the superficial observer and casual reader of the Gospel narrative to escape the doubt and perplexity which filled the minds of the disciples and the hearts of such suppliants for His aid as these sorrowing sisters of the home at Bethany. Who, that has seemingly waited in vain for an answer to agonizing prayer, and has been a temporary victim of disappointed faith and baffled love, has not passed within the cloud that settled down upon the hearts and minds of these devoted pleaders for a brother's life and a Master's love? Who has not felt his soul flooded with such questions as these: why God and His Christ, having wrought some miracles for the healing and preservation of their creatures, have not extended their beneficence to include all, so that there will be no exception among those they love, none to mourn the sickness or pain or loss of those whom their faithful suppliants love? Why He who opens the eyes of the blind, and causes the lame to walk, and cleanses the leper, and wakes the dead from their sleep in some cases, does not aid all who come to Him in faith and adoring love? Why there is pain and sickness and sorrow in the world of

His loving creation? Why He tarries so long in coming to the relief of those He loves, and sometimes does not seem to come at all until too late – offering the husks of consolation and comfort to those who have needed the bread of life?

And these are hard questions to answer to the satisfaction of those whose hearts are paralyzed at the time by a burden of grief, which makes them incapable either of appreciating the uniform evidences of the loving Providence of God in the universe, or of accepting a philosophy of suffering which brings its explanation to the reason of men, but has no assuaging balm for their wounded affections. Yet it is here that we find our explanation of our Lord's strange treatment of the sisters, His discipline of waiting for an answer when only an immediate answer seems to hold out the promise of the relief which is sought. His answer to the plea is contained in His seemingly inexplicable conduct. It is simply, "Wait! Wait, though tempests gather and clouds break above your devoted heads. Don't seek an explanation now. Be content to rest upon the evidences of His love in the past of your own or others' experience. The Master loves you still. He is not deaf to your plea. Be sure that while He tarries in giving you the answer that you want, He is planning some better provision for your needs. Only believe; for 'all things are possible to him that believeth.' There is no insurmountable obstacle to the faith of those who have known His love as a personal experience; they will go on believing in the character and loving purpose of God, 'believing where they cannot prove,' still ready to say with that sublime reach of faith to which the ancient patriarch gave utterance, 'Though He slay me yet will I trust Him.' Or to whisper in some hour of deepest darkness –

““Oh, what could hope and confidence afford  
To tread that path, but this? Thou knowest, Lord!  
Thou knowest, not alone as God, all-knowing;  
As man our mortal weakness, Thou hast proved;  
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,  
O Saviour, Thou hast wept, and Thou hast loved;  
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,  
And find a hiding place, a rest, a home.””

That is the meaning of His strange treatment of Martha and Mary, of their clinging faith in His love and willingness to help. It is the meaning of all delayed answers to the prayers and longings of the human heart. He

disappoints their wants, that He may supply their needs. He shakes the foundations of their faith in His power and purpose to relieve their wants, that He may reveal the richness and wisdom of His ability to satisfy their needs. “He taketh away the first that He may establish the second.” He might have saved Lazarus from the pain of his sickness and the pang of death: He might have saved his sisters the sorrow of parting and the pain of a temporarily shaken faith in His love. But Lazarus would never have been the same man as the Lazarus who came forth from the tomb, nor the faith of the sisters the same as that with which they clung to Him after He had freed their brother from the corruption of the grave, and had given them an illustration of the nearness of the unseen to the seen world, which neither time nor eternity could shake.

Oh, be sure that whatever He does is right, and best! Be sure that even when you do not receive the thing for which you are longing, or in the way that you have expected it would come to you; it is not because He is unable to help you in the way that you desired, nor that He has forgotten you, but that He has some better way than yours to bless you, or some better thing to give you than you have desired. It is not because He is not willing to give you unbroken prosperity or physical health or material wealth or a life unclouded by sorrow, if that were best for you; but because He knows that is not the thing you need, or that you can possess, without the injury of the best that is in you, or the best that He is able to give you. “He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”

## XVII – The Woman with the Alabaster Box

“Then said Jesus, ‘Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always.’” – John 12:7–8.

IN this incident of the anointing of Jesus, the chill, damp, fetid odor of the tomb gives place to the gracious, welcome warmth of the guest chamber and the delicious fragrance of the rare and precious spikenard. We come out of the hospital with its ether-laden atmosphere, with its groans of pain and its suffering-lined faces, into the perfume-laden atmosphere of the springtide out of doors, with its wealth of bloom and blossom, its earth redolent with the rising scent of the bounteous rains, its seemingly profligate expenditure of all the wealth of the year for the gladness and the quickening of the life which it bears upon its bosom. We pass from the

darkness of a temporarily eclipsed faith into the warm sunshine of love's noontide.

We have studied Christ's treatment of those who stand in the shadow of the tomb, let us see what He will do in the light of exuberant joy. To the disciples, it would seem, as well as to Judas, such seeming waste of wealth, as was evident in the extravagant expenditure upon a box of ointment and its lavish outpouring upon the feet of Jesus, and its allowance by Him, is as inexplicable to their sense of the fitness and economy of things, as perplexing to their faith in their Master, whose life had been a perpetual denial of Himself for the relief of the poor and distressed, – as was their wonder and pained perplexity at His delay to answer, and at once, the plea for help from these same sisters, one of whom He now allows to bathe His feet in an ointment which might have been sold, and with the proceeds, a whole countryside of poor have been fed and clothed. And in an age whose standards are largely utilitarian, which sets the highest value upon the utilitarian virtues of honesty, economy, thrift, industry and energy, and which expresses its charity in terms of the utilitarian graces of healing the sick, feeding the poor, educating the ignorant, and multiplying wealth in order to increase its ability to do these things, the sanction which Jesus gives to such extravagant expenditure of wealth and devotion to the mere end of ministering to sentiment through the medium of a fragrant odor, must seem equally, if not more, unwarranted.

I trust I am not too harsh, when I say that the prevailing impression which our age makes upon me is that such graces as are described in St. Paul's eulogium on Love in the thirteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians – the graces of "patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good temper, guilelessness, sincerity" – are in its estimate at best merely incidental to the more necessary virtues and graces above mentioned, and for the most part wasteful and mawkish sentimentalism when they take the place, or stand in the way of these more useful attributes of conduct and character. The "charity" which exhibits itself in such feminine graces is to such an age not only "nothing worth" if it does not add to its expression the useful virtues, but having these in active operation, it is all-sufficient if it lacks these gentler evidences of lavish sentiment.

The act of Mary is one of pure sentiment. It has no promise of returns in the shape of the alleviation of material wants or bodily suffering. It feeds

no hunger, it heals no sickness, it educates no ignorance, it accomplishes no good – from the utilitarian standpoint. It is simply the lavish expression of an overflowing love, the rich offering of a grateful heart, to Him who has returned to Mary a brother beloved. It is a thank offering, which helps no one but Him to whom thanks were due, which brings to the bestower no grateful meed of praise for her wise economy or helpful expenditure such as men so often seek for themselves through the enrichment of others. It yields instead the harsh criticism of those to whom the needs of the heart's affections are as nothing in comparison with the bodily sufferings of the poor and distressed. "To what purpose is this waste?" – St. Matthew tells us all the disciples indignantly murmured – "for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor." And yet to those who have caught the spirit of the Master's standard of valuation, nothing is more gracious, nothing more deserved in all His ministry than the approval and praise which He bestows upon Mary, when He answers, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work upon Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she hath come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, 'Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of as a memorial of her.'"

It is Jesus' treatment of all pure sentiment. And nothing that He did during the whole course of His ministry for the cure of souls, in all His treatment of individual need, was more beneficent, more useful, more in the line of His practice of the arts of the physician, more needed for the education and redemption of the world, than these generous words of approval with which He not only accepted the gift of Mary, but set the seal and stamp of His approval upon every act of sentiment done for the beautifying and softening of human relations and associations.

Even in the case of those who measure all things by the response they get to the question, "Will it pay?" we are inclined to answer in the affirmative. Business with its hard and fast drawn columns of profit and loss, is done better and more profitably if its transactions are softened and refined by courtesy and politeness: in the noise of the world's marketplaces as well as in the quiet of the home, it is the graces which have no direct relation to the getting of wealth or the furtherance of trade, that make the wheels run more smoothly, the ointment that makes them glide more

quickly along the tracks of commerce. The gentle man in business is at as great an advantage over the boor, as is the gentleman in society; the man who dispenses kindness in word and deed, as the man who establishes hospitals and schools, or distributes loaves to feed the hungry. And to those who would criticize the contribution which some generous soul makes to the pleasure of the world, before whose eyes rise up the thin, drawn, hunger-lined faces and disease-stricken forms of those whom the price of a feast of pleasure would relieve, the answer is as generous as it is just, "The poor ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." If your days are spent with a due regard for the suffering and want with which the world is filled, ever seeking an opportunity to aid those who are in distress, with a hand ever stretched out to do good as you have the opportunity, you will not spend your time or means amiss if in a rare spirit of generosity you lay a feast occasionally for the good cheer of those who stand nearest to you through ties of blood or friendship, nor will you do well to criticize or condemn those who, though you may not feel the claims of hospitality upon you, feel that for themselves the claims of friendship and goodwill towards men are not satisfied until they have made some contribution to the gladness and joy of these, as well as to the relief of the less favored members of society.

But Jesus not only accepts and approves the offering of Mary as a tribute of love and a token of gratitude because of what she has received at His hands; He sees in it, what perhaps not even Mary had seen, and gives her credit for that also. She had anointed Him for gratitude: He accepts the offering as an anointing for His burial. The most grateful aspect of her act in the eyes and to the heart of Jesus is that unconsciously she has not waited until His body is prepared for the tomb, but that living she lays her tribute of affection at His feet, and in the weariness which was already oppressing Him as He drew near to the hour of His death she refreshes Him with the assured knowledge that amid all the treachery and cruelty and disloyalty that are hanging over Him, one heart at least beats true for His sake, one mind at least is devising schemes for His benefit without regard to cost, and without thought of material returns.

This is the message then that the act of Mary and the praise of Jesus have for you who may be niggardly in your estimate or practice of the value of sentiment in the practical affairs and everyday associations of life. Lighten and brighten the burdens of the daily task with whatsoever

offerings of courtesy, kindness and gentleness you may have opportunity to make to others. You will not only grow richer towards God, but I verily believe richer among men. Remember that the claims of society upon you to contribute something to its meager stock of good cheer are as real as those claims which poverty-stricken and distressed humanity has upon you, as the rule of your life, to relieve its wants and alleviate its sufferings.

Break your alabaster boxes of deserved praise upon the beads of your friends while they are living and can hear and be gladdened by the recognition of the faithfulness which at least they are trying to exercise: let your anointing be *for* their burial and *before*, and not *after* it. Bring it in the shape of fragrant words of commendation and appreciation, rather than in the shape of a tablet to their memories with its stereotyped words of faint praise, or as a belated tombstone over their heads which lie deep beneath the sod. Remember these lines, and be as generous in your praise as you are only too apt to be with your criticism:

How much would I care for it could I know  
That when I am under the grass or snow,  
The raveled garment of life's brief day  
Folded and quietly laid away,  
The spirit let loose from mortal bars  
And somewhere away among the stars, –  
How much do you think it would matter then  
What praise was lavished upon me when,  
Whatever might be its stint or store  
It neither could help nor harm me more.

## XVIII – Judas

“Jesus answered them, ‘Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?’” – John 6:70.

WE come now in our study of the application of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” in His ministry as the Physician of the soul, to three cases of failure in His practice of the cure of souls. For in the realm of the spiritual nature of man, as well as in that of his physical nature there are incurables; and the ministry of Jesus was no exception to the rule. Once it is said of Him, as though accounting for His failure to work miracles of healing upon the bodies of men, “He could there do no mighty works because of their unbelief”; just as the Psalmist accounts for the failure of the

purpose of the Almighty, “Yea, they turned back and tempted the Lord God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” The free and untrammelled will of man which constitutes his opportunity to rise almost to the heights of God, also constitutes his ability to thwart the will of God, and to descend to the level of devils. There are spiritual, as well as physical incurables then in the province of God’s operations, in the ministry of His Son; not from any lack of willingness on the part of Him, of whom it is said “He willeth that none should perish,” but because of their refusal to put themselves in the way of life. Judas, Herod and Pilate seem to fall into this category. They refused to submit to the treatment, each in his own way, which Jesus offered them for the salvation of their souls.

It was Judas, St. John tells us, who voiced the sentiments of the disciples in their criticism of the act of Mary in breaking the alabaster box, they from mistaken motives of utility, he, the same evangelist tells us, “not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag and bare what was put therein.” And this brief estimate of the motives of Judas gives us the character of his disease, is an expression of what Jesus had long known, reading the signs of His disciple’s secret malady; but which John and the other disciples only knew after his betrayal of Jesus, and read into their after-estimate of the character of Judas when they came to tell the story of their Master’s ministry.

I ask you to note well this fact, for it throws an important light upon the treatment of Jesus in His dealing with Judas throughout the whole course of His ministry – that no one but Jesus Himself, knew the real character of Judas until after the betrayal. Even when Jesus prophesied that one of them should betray Him, the other disciples had but slight if any suspicion as to whom He was alluding. It shocked them. The very fact that Jesus entrusted the bag to Judas must have lulled their suspicions if they had any, and have seemed to them a mark of peculiar trust imposed in the treasurer and caterer for the little band. When the name of Judas is mentioned in the histories which some of them afterwards wrote, they always alluded to him, as “Judas, who also betrayed Him.” Or, as in the words of our text written of one of the utterances of Jesus in the early part of His ministry, “Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?” When John adds, “He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve,” he is writing in the light of after-revelations of the kind of man Judas was. He knew nothing

then of his true character. Judas was like one of those unfortunates who has an incurable malady which is known only to himself and his physician. He goes about his duties, walks among his friends and associates, wearing no signs of the disease which shall later cause his death, and no one knows his secret.

You may say that if Jesus knew the peculiar character and temptation of this disciple, it is strange that He called him to be one of the trusted twelve; stranger still that He should have put him in a position which would offer peculiar temptations to his weakness. But that was Jesus' way. He called His disciples not only for their companionship and as His successors in the work and ministry to which He was training them; but for the salvation and enrichment of their own spiritual natures. He called Simon, because He knew his weakness, and had confidence in his capabilities under His care; He called Judas because He feared he was an incurable, and desired to give him the only chance that he had for recovery and restoration to moral integrity and spiritual health. And His treatment of him after his call was in accordance with His diagnosis of his fatal weakness. He put him in charge of the funds of the band of disciples, because He must have seen that if Judas was to be cured of his covetousness at all, it must be by exceptional trust under surveillance, rather than by suspicious distrust and public exposure.

The very words which He used at the very start of His association with and training of the Twelve, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" were, I believe, spoken in loving remonstrance, as a warning to Judas that He knew his character, and as a reminder by which he might profit to the establishment of a character that would measure up to his reputation in the eyes of his fellow disciples. It is treatment by suggestion, by an honest laying before the patient the nature and peril of his disease and then telling him to go to work to effect his cure by cooperation with his physician. That is the most modern as well as the most intelligent treatment. "You are a sick man," the physician says, "a very sick man, and your disease is of the most serious nature; but it is not yet incurable; you can get well, if you will submit and follow, my treatment. It all depends upon you."

That was the method of our Lord's dealing with Judas, was it not? We see it, do we not, in this first warning which Jesus gives Judas of the seriousness of his besetting sin of covetousness? We see it in His implied rebuke of the motive of Judas that lay back of his sordid estimate of the

money value of Mary's gift, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred pence ... ?" As though He had said to Judas privately under cover of rebuking all such false depreciation of sentiment – "Such devotion and wholehearted loyalty as is here evidenced is worth all the silver, or even gold, in the world, for thirty pieces of which you are planning to betray Me, and in so doing to sell your soul." We see it in that last solemn prophecy of Jesus, when He said as He sat at meat with them for the last time, "Verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray Me"; and then – lowering His voice so that none but John and Judas might hear His answer to the startled questions of the disciples, "Lord, is it I?" – He whispered, "He it is that dippeth with Me in the dish." In all these instances, to the very last, it is as though Jesus were trying by every art of warning and persuasion known to Him to rescue Judas from his deadly sin, and pluck him, even when he was about to execute his already formed contract of betrayal, from the jaws of spiritual death.

And if I am right in my understanding of the purpose and method of Jesus in the supreme effort of His ministry for the salvation of men, for the cure of souls; if His relations with Judas were not those of an actor of a prearranged role, in which one of the figures is appointed beforehand to play the part of villain, and is selected for that purpose, but those of the physician of souls who would not that any should perish but that all, even the vilest, might be saved, and who keeps His sickest patients closest to Him because they need Him most; then, I think, that there is no more exalted instance of "the love which passeth knowledge" in all human history, no, nor in the life of love which Jesus Himself lived among and for men. We read the story of Father Damien, who volunteered to spend his days among the lepers, knowing that it meant loathsome companionship from the day he went to their island home, and leprosy and a slow and hideous death for him in the end. We read of the young physician from our own state university, who, in his pursuit of the cure for the dread plague of the South, yellow fever, subjected himself to infection, and died in the interest of future generations. We read those solemn and exalted words of the Master Himself, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends"; and we unconsciously think of those who have claims of love and service upon us because of their kinship or friendship to us. But none of these ideals of heroic service for the good of others, no such conception of the words of Jesus, touches more than the

fringe of the love of souls which Jesus manifested when He chose as His disciple, and labored over him to the end, “Judas who afterwards betrayed Him” for a price which surpasses in its insignificance the least of all the bribes for which traitors throughout the ages have betrayed a trust. To live on an island with lepers, to clothe oneself in the filthy clothes of those who have been victims of the dread disease of yellow fever, both in the interest of suffering humanity, is to love surpassingly; to have in one’s employ one whom one suspects of disloyalty without risking the reputation and good name of the suspected person upon grounds of suspicion, is noble; but to make a companion and friend of a man, to eat out of the same dish, to trust with one’s secret plans, one whom one *knows* to have all the elements in his nature which will make him a traitor if the opportunity offers itself, in order to save such an one from himself, is the supreme instance of “the love that passeth knowledge”. And that is what Jesus did for Judas.

That is what He is doing for you, if any of you are cherishing any secret sin that may prove in the end a betrayal of your Lord and Master. He seeks to save you by trusting you, unworthy of trust though you know yourself to be. He has made you His disciple for your own sake that He may rescue you from your sin before it becomes an incurable malady. Let His love save you from secret disloyalty; crucify your sin before it crucifies Him afresh and puts Him to an open shame. Beat down Satan under your feet; before the thought becomes the wish, and the wish the act, and the act the habit. Pluck out your eyes, cut off your hand, rather than that they shall become the instruments of treacherous disloyalty to Him “who loved you and gave Himself for you.” “It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, you be cast into the Gehenna, where all that is false and corrupt, finds its place at last.”

## XIX – Pilate

“Jesus answered him, ‘Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?’” – John 18:34.

PILATE is the second of the incurables who came under the care of Jesus during these closing days of His ministry. And though His treatment of him was short, it was none the less thorough and painstaking, no less a proof of His loving patience with the souls of men, than were His labors for the restoration of Judas. There came a time in the history of his case, when, as with Herod, the questions of Pilate elicited no response; but not until He

had exhausted all His skill in an effort to bring Pilate back to the point of spiritual responsiveness at which he might have laid hold upon the power of Jesus to save him from the infection of his own selfish ambition, and to raise him from the death of selfishness to the new life of righteousness and unselfish loyalty to the Truth as a servant in His kingdom.

From the moment that Jesus was brought into his presence to be judged, Pilate recognized in Him the evidences of faultless integrity; and from the time when he held his first interview with Him, he knew Jesus to be one who had it within His power to make of him the man that he ought to be, if once he subjected himself to His guidance. His repeated interviews were all an effort to prove to himself that that was not true, which he knew in his inmost soul was true. He was like the man who seeks from his physician the assurance of health, though he knows only too well his own condition. He asks to have his own willful self-deception confirmed: he deludes himself with the idea that if only he can be assured that he is well, his sickness will no longer oppress him. Or like the disciples of Christian Science, falsely so called, to get rid of disease by denying the existence of disease. We see this to be the state of Pilate's mind and conscience in his scornful question, "What is truth?" when in the next breath he shows that he recognizes the reality of truth, by taking Jesus before the populace, and declaring, "I find no fault in Him at all." We see it in his threefold repetition of the phrase, "I find in Him no fault." We see it in the mocking inscription which he causes to be placed on His cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; and his refusal to change it, saying, "What I have written, I have written." As though unwittingly he persists in declaring the truth of what he feels in his inmost heart, whatever may be his outward declarations and pretended scorn of the claims of Jesus before the world.

Nor are his repeated efforts to shift the responsibility for the condemnation and death of Jesus less a proof of his own consciousness of the innocence of Jesus; and so of his own perverted sense of justice, and its miscarriage, in case His condemnation and sentence are forced upon him. He seeks to shift the responsibility first upon the shoulders of the Jewish Sanhedrin, then upon the populace, then upon Herod, then he chides Jesus with His own obstinacy in not aiding him in his obvious intention to save Him if he can. When Jesus, wearied at last with His efforts to get Pilate to respond to the better nature within him, is silent before him, Pilate says then, as though he would place the blame upon Jesus Himself, "Speakest

Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?" It is the man's own admission of the empty futility and needlessness of his blatant attempts to make others carry the burden of his own guilt, and of his own ability to meet the requirements of Jesus if he would. It only remains for him to perform the last act of infatuated and absurd denial of conscious guilt, when he takes a basin of water and washes his hand in the sight of the people, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."

The painstaking interest of Jesus in striving to help the nobler side of the man's nature to rise above its weaker side, the inherent sense of justice and truth of Pilate himself, the timely warning of her who stood nearest to him and was a faithful adviser in his hour of perplexed anxiety, all failed alike. Pilate by the force of his own refusal to listen to all the better and truer voices of his nature and circumstances, within and without, passed from a state of quick responsiveness to one of incurable obduracy. The acute became the chronic, the easily curable the hopeless incurable. And why?

That Jesus knew the reason is evident in the first question which He addressed to Pilate, when he asked of Him in the interview which he sought, "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" and Jesus answered, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" He had already diagnosed the case before Him. It was that of a man who was wholly influenced by extraneous influences, a man who trimmed his sails to catch the winds of popular applause, who set his course to reach the haven of royal favor, whose motto was "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost"; and who counted the principles of justice, equity and truth to be but current coin to be exchanged for injustice, tyranny and cruelty, if they were the currency needed to pay his way to the goal of his supreme ambition. This is the meaning of Jesus' question, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell thee ...?" He knew that the voices of self-preservation, of self-interest, of selfish ambition within the breast of Pilate echoed to the sound of the voices of popular condemnation, of popular applause, of worldly power without him. He knew the path of political intrigue by which Pilate had found his way to his present position of prestige and power; and He knew as well that the same path would likely be followed in Pilate's judgment of Himself unless He could awake in him the nobler instincts of justice, righteousness and truth, by revealing him to

himself as he was and by pointing out to him himself as it was possible for him to be as His disciple, and as a servant in His kingdom of the Truth.

But Pilate would have none of His guidance; unwillingly, but step by step he refused to follow the path which led down from his judgment seat of power, perhaps by the way of a cross for him also, even though he saw clearly that that was the only way along which he could find his true self, and keep his own spiritual health and moral integrity. It was by refusing to follow the dictates of his own conscience and to obey the directions of Him whom he knew only too well as the true Physician of his soul, that he passed from his place among the patients of Jesus and took his place in the ranks of the incurables.

And his case is no rare one in the history of spiritual maladies. It is perhaps the most common of the ways in which men kill the spiritual life that is in them. By the deliberate disregard of the dictates of their own consciences; by the willful prostitution of their own better natures to the passion and greed for gain and power; by the slow silencing of the higher calls to honor and duty and unselfish service through their absorption in the claims of self-interest and self-aggrandizement; by their specious efforts to deceive themselves into thinking that the responsibility, which at first they know to be their own, belongs to others; by refusing to follow the guidance of Him whom they know to be the Physician of their souls' needs and the guide to their souls' health; by washing their hands at last of all admitted responsibility for spiritual consecration: until they drift at last to the bourn of forfeited opportunity from which there is no return, or take their places among the hopelessly incurable, of their own will declaring their own hopeless impotence or confirmed obduracy, as you choose, saying, "What I have written, I have written," of the inscription which they have placed over the cross upon which they have crucified afresh their Prince of Life.

I wonder if any one of the multitude who will take no positive stand either for or against Christianity and what it stands for, the multitude in the valley of decision, really thinks in his own inmost heart that by refusing either to accept or reject Christ and His Church, he nullifies the responsibility which otherwise he admits would be his? Certainly no one makes the like plea in any other relation or sphere of life. Who, for example, would contend for a moment that the mere fact that he neither accepts nor rejects the food which is offered him, or the medicine for his sickness, would save him from starving or stop the progress of his disease?

Who would plead that he is not responsible for his ignorance, because he never really accepted or rejected the opportunities for learning that were held out to him? Who would go into a court of law, and offer in extenuation for his crime that he never accepted or rejected the laws that he has broken? Who would excuse his poverty and failure in the business world by the retort that he neither accepted nor rejected the laws of profit and loss, of demand and supply, that govern that sphere of human endeavor and industry?

And yet men do seem to plead, that since they have never voluntarily taken upon them the vows of the Christian life, they are not responsible; that their responsibility begins when they accept Christ and what He stands for; while they hope to be saved some time by the plea that they have never consciously rejected Him or the life to which He calls them. Do they really mean it, can they conscientiously think it? Can it be otherwise than that everyone knows that responsibility is not made by accepting it, is not unmade by rejecting it? It belongs to every man whether he wills or no. It can no more be gotten rid of than Pilate could get rid of Jesus by all the subtle subterfuges by which he sought to turn Him over to others. It is not gotten rid of by washing one's hands, and saying, "I will have nothing to do with it one way or another, see ye to it." It simply exists for every man by virtue of what he is, and what opportunities he has to be otherwise if he is not what he ought to be. The only voice he has in the matter is as to whether or not he will try to live up to it. Whether men "will rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things" into the truer and purer atmosphere of spiritual health and strength, or sink by the inertia of their own dead wills to the state of hopeless incurables in the spiritual kingdom. There was but one answer to Pilate's question, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" and Pilate knew the answer. There is but one answer to the same question for you; and you know it.

## XX – Herod

"Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing." – Luke 23:9.

HEROD is the last of the incurables who came under the attention of Jesus. The tale of His labors over the souls of the three men, which we have been studying, is in a descending scale. Judas, He labored over for the whole three years of His ministry; Pilate, for the brief space of a few hours;

Herod, He passed by altogether as having passed beyond the scope of His power before his case came under His eye. The story of Herod's contact with Jesus is contained in a single line: "Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing."

Herod's condition gave no grounds even for the hope of a cure: from the first he was a hopeless incurable. And Jesus knew it. He knew the past history of Herod's experience under John's ministry. He knew of John's failure with him, of his rejection of John's advice, of his silencing the voice of John, his first physician, in death. For such obstinate irresponsiveness, He had no cure: He was silent under Herod's garrulous inquisitiveness. There was nothing to say to him, except to tell him that he had passed beyond the possibility of such skill in the cure of souls, as even Jesus Himself possessed. Herod's was a case of what might be called spiritual inanition, brought on by the slow silencing of all the better instincts in his nature, and confirmed by the silencing of the voice of John the Baptist, the last good angel of his life. To offer to such a character what he had persistently rejected until he had lost the power of effective response, would have been a waste of time and words. And Jesus never wasted either.

If you trace the history of Herod, as it is known through contemporary history, or as it appears in the few glimpses which you get of the man in the Gospels, you must see that in all probability Herod never was a serious seeker after truth. His story is the story of a libertine from start to finish. Whatever interest he seems to have had in the truth was purely that of the dilettanti. Jaded and sated by a constant round of sensual pleasures, it was but natural that he should seek at times something to break the monotony of the round. If he sent for John, and "heard him gladly," it was because of the novelty that it afforded him of hearing a preacher of righteousness in the dissolute court over which he ruled. If he seems to have been touched and moved to better things, it was but for a moment, and because of the response which his conscience, not yet wholly dead, made to the impassioned plea which came from the lips of John. If when Pilate sent Jesus to him, he questioned Him with garrulous nervousness, it was because his superstitious fears haunted him with the belief that John whom he had slain had come to life again in the person of Jesus, and that he wished some word of assurance which would silence the voice of conscience which still stung him at sundry moments; or else it was because, having heard of the

miracles of Jesus, he desired to introduce a new sport into his court, to witness the wonders of this new juggler.

But when the mood of the moment passes, he invariably goes back to his old mode of life. He hears John gladly one moment, and the next he is reveling in the drunken excesses of the banquet, or loudly applauding the lascivious contortions and seductive grace of the Eastern dance. He is moved to pangs of remorse under the scathing arraignment of his shocking adultery through the influence of John's preaching; and the next time we see him, he is calling for the head of the preacher. He questions Jesus with eager inquisitiveness one minute; and failing to obtain the desired response to his questions, or to extort an evidence of His wonder-working skill, he sends Him back to Pilate with taunts and jibes wearing the gorgeous yellow robe of the court jester. That is Herod; and nothing that we know of him leads us to think that he was otherwise in any period or under any other conditions throughout the whole course of his shameful career. He is utterly lacking in any appreciation of the serious side of life: aye, more, he deliberately slays or suppresses every serious call that comes to him, and plunges deeper into the frivolities and excesses by which he seeks to realize an untroubled and conscienceless existence. I know of no man so wholly bad in the whole company of those whose destinies brought them into contact with Jesus, as Herod.

“So” – says Boyd Carpenter – “our Lord was silent – not because of Herod's sin, for sin did not silence Him who carried His love near to the sinning, and who spoke the words of His sweetest welcome to the weary and the heavy-laden, to the fallen and the sin-burdened. No! not because of Herod's sin was Christ silent; but because Herod had wrought that crowning wrong against his own soul, when he wickedly silenced in death the voice of God which, speaking by the Baptist, had pleaded with him against himself. He was silent, not because Herod had sinned, but because he had stilled the voice which witnessed against sin. He was silent, because for such men silence is the only weapon left. Words and speech would only have been played with or turned aside to the detriment of the soul.”

The nearest approach to Herod in modern literature is Tito, in George Eliot's “Romola”. An absolute ingrate in the treatment which he rendered to those to whom he owed most, having prostituted to his own selfish pleasure all the most sacred relations and obligations of life; a prodigal in the use which he made of every opportunity that came to him for noble

living, it was said of him, that “he was of so easy a conscience that he would make a stepping-stone of his father’s corpse.” “He has a lithe sleekness about him that seems marvelously fitted for slipping into any nest he fixes his mind on.” “He had an unconquerable aversion to anything unpleasant, even when an object very much beloved and admired was on the other side of it.” This in part was his philosophy of life: “Any maxims that required a man to fling away the good that was needed to make existence sweet, were only the lining of human selfishness turned outwards; they were made by men who wanted others to sacrifice themselves for their sake.” “He would rather that Baldasarre (his foster father, to whom he owed everything) should not suffer; he liked no one to suffer; but could any philosophy prove to him that he was bound to care for another’s suffering more than his own? To do so, he must have loved Baldasarre devotedly, and he did not love him: was that his own fault? Gratitude! seen closely, it made no valid claim; his father’s life would have been dreary without him; are we convicted of a debt to men for the pleasure they give themselves?” “He had simply chosen to make life easy to himself – to carry his human lot if possible in such a way that it should pinch him nowhere; but the choice had at various times landed him in unexpected positions.” “He would have been equal to any sacrifice that was not unpleasant.” “Of other goods than pleasure he can form no conception.”

And you must agree with me, if you analyze closely the acts and words of a large part, not only of the non-Christian, but of the Christian world, that this is their philosophy also. And it dates back, far beyond the Christian era, to the heathen philosophy of Epicurus, the essence of whose system was that pleasure is the greatest good.

What is the application of the lesson taught by Herod’s, and his type’s, philosophy of life, to yours? I am not charging any of you with such gross excesses and moral degeneracy as that which characterized the conduct of Herod, or even of George Eliot’s Tito. I hardly think that any of you could be proved guilty: indeed such conduct as theirs would be a practical impossibility under the circumstances and influences which obtain in such an age as ours, certainly in that set in society in which you move. The probability, on the contrary, is that your external conduct is such as would meet with the approval of a Pharisee. As touching the righteousness that is in the law, whether civil, social or moral, you may be blameless. But with all that, are you forming your conduct in obedience to the law of

Christ? Is not the ruling principle in your life rather to get and hold that which you conceive to be your own good? Have you never silenced the voices of the serious call to duty and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, in obedience to the call of appetite and ambition, of selfish pleasure and comfortable ease? Is there no voice that used to ring within your conscience telling you in notes of solemn warning and high endeavor the way of life, that now lies slain within the forgotten chambers of a now-dead conscience? Are there no sins that used to trouble you, that are now the welcome guests in the temple of your soul?

The spiritual life that is in you can die as effectually by a process of dry rot, as by the more loathsome and quicker decay that ends in corruption: it will die as surely through the slow atrophy of its members by disuse, as by the speedy destruction of its organs by acute infection. The blessed voices of God's call to duty and service and holiness are as readily silenced by being drowned out in the din of selfish pleasures and ambitions as by the deliberate slaughter of the holiest instincts of your nature. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." It is so that you will find the true pleasure of the soul, and cleanse the corrupted currents of its life. Let the voice of the Preacher of righteousness drown the voices of selfish pleasure and ambition.

"'Live while you live,' the Epicure would say,  
'And seize the pleasure of the present day.'  
'Live while you live,' the Sacred Preacher cries,  
'And give to God each moment as it flies.'  
Lord, in my view let both united be:  
I live in pleasure while I live in Thee."

## XXI – The Penitent Thief

"And he said unto Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'" – Luke 23:42–43.

THOSE of you who are familiar with that little classic of modern fiction, "Beside the Bonny Brier Bush – and I trust all of you are – will remember the closing scene in "The Doctor's Last Journey". The old Doctor is dying; and after he has repeated the child's prayer "as he had done every night of his life," he has dropped into a quiet sleep, unbroken until the swish of the snow against the window, rouses him to a state of semi-

delirium. As his mind wanders in its delirium, he is out on his visits to his patients of the Glen whom a lifetime of devoted ministry to their ailments had endeared to him, as him to them. A few broken snatches of conversation with some watcher for his coming; and “then he was away in his sleep on some errand of mercy, struggling through the storm.” He is talking now to his horse, the faithful companion of many years’ hard service:

“It’s a coorse nicht, Jess, an’ heavy travelin’; can ye see afore ye, lass? for a’m clean confused wi’ the snaw; bide a wee till a’ find the diveesion o’ the roads; it’s about here back or forrit.

“Steady, lass, steady; dinna plunge; it’s a drift we’re in, but ye’re no sinkin’; ... up noo; ... there ye are on the road again.

“Eh, it’s deep the nicht, an’ hard on us baith, but there’s a puir wumman micht dee if we didna warstle through; ... that’s it; ye ken fine what a’m sayin’.

“Yon’s the hoose, black in the snaw. Sandie! man, ye frichtened us; a’ didna see ye ahint the dyke; hoo’s the wife?”

I trust that this illustration of the tender solicitude for his humble patients, that haunts the dying hours of a beloved character in fiction, may not impress you as unworthy of the use to which I wish to put it of making real to you the dying solicitude of Jesus for the needs and wants of those who were gathered about the Cross of His dying agony. First, it is a whispered prayer that rises to His lips for His executioners, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!” Now, the needs of His mother and His beloved disciple claim His attention, as He makes provision for their future; and again, it is the prayer of a penitent thief, who hangs by His side on his cross of pain and merited penalty, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!” which elicits the gracious response, “Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Even now – as throughout His ministry of the cure of souls through which we have followed Him, when His mind might have been centered upon His own wants and sufferings, His thoughts are of others, of the humblest and the vilest, as well as of the nearest and dearest to Him, – He is still, and to all, the good Physician. From His own deathbed He breathes blessing upon, and ministers healing to, the souls of others: from His own bed of pain He carries comfort and assurance to another’s bed of death. He, who failed in the cases of Judas, Pilate and Herod, admitting them to be incurables even

under His unfailing care, vindicates His claims as an all-powerful Physician of the soul, by sending a penitent thief into Paradise, and restoring him to eternal life and health.

The thought that suggested that when Jesus was crucified it should be between two thieves was the very refinement of cruelty. It was as though by intention that He, who in His life was numbered among the transgressors and entitled “the friend of publicans and sinners,” should in His death also be so numbered and brought in touch with humanity at its lowest. But the act that was intended in derision, came to Him laden with opportunity, offered to Him the final opening for the crowning vindication of His ministry as a physician of the soul.

The good physician cannot choose his environment, he cannot select his patients upon the basis of their congeniality: there can be but one call that must be all-powerful with him, as a determinant of his field of action, and that the call of human need. I think it is true of all who would minister to human want. Life is so intermingled, the highest and best between the lowest and vilest, Jesus between two thieves, holiness set down amid vileness, that we cannot be faithful, and have the conditions of our service otherwise. We cannot live our lives as instruments of usefulness for the good of others, and not live them in touch with evil. And to the unselfish soul the association is not only inevitable, it is welcome. It represents the opportunity for which he has longed; and the only question of practical importance is as to the use of the opportunity afforded: whether it shall chill enthusiasm into indifference by the spectacle of the impenitence and ingratitude of one half of sinful and suffering humanity, or warm it into sympathy by the touch of penitence and responsiveness exhibited by the other half.

Impenitent vice is so blatant, so hardened, so utterly abhorrent to the sensitive refinement of the truly spiritual nature, that the whole disposition of such must be to avoid contact with it. To plead the dangers of contagion, to rest content with the comfortable practice of virtue in the midst of culture and refinement, and to leave such intimacy with the hardened and impenitent to others less sensitive to the loathsome and disgusting aspects of this side of life. If Jesus had not sought out the vicious and hardened members of the society of the day during the whole course of His ministry, if He had not touched with healing power the filthy sores of the leper and breathed the fetid atmosphere of the corruption of death, it might have been

said that the companionship of the Cross was forced upon Him, that His contact was of the nature of circumstance. But knowing the character of His life-ministry, we see as He saw that what the world counted the crowning feature of His ignominy, was the last great offering of opportunity for the practice of His mission, for the extension of His cure of souls to the utmost bounds of need among the world's outcasts. And unheeding the reviling epithets and abuse of the impenitent criminal, his ears are open to the cry for help from the other cross of penitent trust, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"; and He answers with words, that while they cannot heal his bodily sufferings, nor call him back from the cruel bed of death, send a dying thief across its impending gulf with the assurance of pardon and peace and eternal rest, as He answers from His own Cross, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

And here is revealed to us the point at which the ministry of Jesus transcends that of any merely human scheme for the cure of souls. It overcomes death by taking away its sting and by following the soul in its flight to the unseen world beyond. None other has ever spoken with confidence of the soul's destiny there, its certainty and its character. None other has had "the keys of hell and death," or the authority to declare with perfect assurance the future of the soul's life.

Such assurance, no matter from whom it come, if it have the clear ring of invincible faith, is a contribution to human faith and human sorrow. The wrench of death is so fearful, whether it visit others beloved, or ourselves; the accidents of dissolution are so terrible in their seeming destruction of the very citadel of life; the doubts of immortality are so persistent in their hold upon the mind; – that any assurance of a paradise on high, a home of the soul, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, is welcome. Again the inequalities of life are so great, its disappointments so large a part of its experience, its sorrows so interwoven with its joys, its surface so marked by crosses of suffering or shame or penalty, that one could hardly look upon existence as worthwhile if it were not for an ever-persisting faith in the compensation which comes through the endurance of the soul after death.

And when the assurance emanates from Jesus, the great Physician, who knoweth our frame that we are but dust, who probed the inmost secrets of our mortal nature, who read every line in its constitution, who saw it wrecked and in ruins under the ravages of disease and sin, who stood over

the grave with its foul corruption, who Himself had most reason to doubt the continuance of the life which was taken from Him for no other reason than that He alone of all the race was wholly worthy to keep it; but who read most deeply and convincingly to those who heard Him, both friends and foes, the mind of God – even if we believed not in His own Divine knowledge of all things present and future – as to the one being of all the race’s history over whose eyes there was no veil of ignorance, we stop and listen with the certainty that He knows. And our hopes are lost in sight, our faith passes into knowledge, when, amid the wreck of earthly hopes and the dissolution of material evidences, He speaks the gracious words which give a penitent thief assurance of immortal residence with Himself, thereby opening the gate of Paradise to all who come to Him in true penitence and humble faith.

Yes, the message to which you have listened is the ministry of the great Physician of souls at the bed of the dying. It is more than that, it is His last ministry, His last will and testament to a world for which, living, He became poor, and dying, he made rich.

The cross – it takes our guilt away;  
It holds the fainting spirit up;  
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,  
And sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave,  
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;  
It takes its terror from the grave,  
And gilds the bed of death with light.

The balm of life, the cure of woe,  
The measure and the pledge of love,  
The sinners’ refuge here below,  
The angels’ theme in heaven above.

## XXII – Thomas

“Then saith He to Thomas, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.’” – John 20:27.

WE are dealing now with our Lord's post-Resurrection ministry. The interval which elapsed between the subject and the time which last engaged our study and the present subject, marks His passage over the chasm which separates the seen from the unseen world. He has triumphed over death and sin, and opened the gates of life. The three cases which now come up for our consideration are instances of the methods which as an expert Physician of souls, He used in the training of those who were to succeed Him in the cure of souls; rather than examples of His treatment of the individual – though they are the last also. We are, as it were, invited to a clinic.

Let us glance first at the treatment which Thomas received at the hands of Jesus as an example of His methods in dealing with the maladies of individual souls. In this case, the malady is that of doubt of that which has not been submitted to the test of the senses. The disciples to whom Jesus had already appeared, and who had looked upon Him in His risen body with their eyes, reported the fact to Thomas with profoundest conviction of its reality. "We have seen the Lord," said they; only to receive the quick response from Thomas, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hands into His side, I will not believe."

It was a perfectly natural position for Thomas to take. Constituted as he was, I suppose he could not have taken any other. It is entirely consistent with what we know of the character of the man, as he appears before us at other times in the Gospels. When Jesus declares His intention to subject Himself to almost certain peril of His life by going to the home at Bethany after the death of Lazarus, the disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again?" But Thomas, with gloomy despondency, sighs, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." When Jesus spoke in veiled terms of His departure from among them, and comforted them with the words, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know"; it was Thomas who asked the plaintive question, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" And so we are entirely prepared, when the disciples declare their satisfied convictions, to hear Thomas burst out with a denial of their witness, and the declaration that nothing short of a tangible demonstration involving the examinations of His wounds would satisfy him. Thomas belonged to a class of people whose temperament is naturally despondent. His skepticism grew out of his fears. The news that his Lord had risen was too good to be true. He had never

expected anything but final failure for the Master's mission; and now when the unexpected, and to him the impossible, was reported to have happened, not even the testimony of those whom he would have trusted as witnesses of almost any other fact, is sufficient to overcome his despondent and gloomy fears.

You have known such people. People, who all of their lives live under the tyranny of temperament. People, who by the very law of their natures look for disappointment in the things that they most wish to enjoy; whose fears that what they long for will escape them are just in proportion to the intensity of their desires; who will not believe the good news of the accomplishment of their desires at secondhand, and even doubt the evidence of their own senses, because of the preconceived conviction that they are impossible of attainment. This utterance of Thomas then is the utterance of one of this class. It is the utterance of one who has habituated himself to think that the best and happiest and purest aspirations and wishes are always doomed to failure and disappointment – who deems that the brightest and fairest things in life, almost because they are bright and fair, are destined to perish. There was no disposition on the part of Thomas to reject the miraculous, because of its seeming contradiction of, or interference with, the laws of nature, even to the extent of a resurrection from the dead. He had lived in the atmosphere of the miraculous for three years. He had come to see with his own eyes that nothing was impossible – with the cooperation of human faith – to Him, who Himself was the supreme miracle. His skepticism was not rational, but temperamental: it was not the result of unbelief in the powers of Jesus, but of fears for the safety of Jesus. It grew not out of antipathy to the miraculous, but out of love for the person of Jesus.

And Jesus so treated it. He, who would not so much as appear in the city which cast Him out and crucified Him, though by so doing He might have silenced the lie which the watchers at the tomb were bribed to circulate; gave to Thomas His loyal, though doubting, disciple, the full measure of the evidence which he demanded, when He said to him, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless but believing." It is always so: there is always evidence enough given to satisfy the believing soul, whose faith is beclouded or temporarily eclipsed, by its despondent fears. There is evidence enough in visible Nature and the seen world to satisfy the most

skeptical, if he wants to believe, of the unseen presence of God, and of the reality of the resurrection of Christ, the foundation of all our faith in the present and our hopes for the future.

But the evidence given Thomas is accompanied with a rebuke: “Thomas, because thou has seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The rebuke remains. The evidences, unseen by the physical eye, yet appreciable by the spiritual vision, are better than anything Nature or the universe can reveal. Those who accept the first are indeed the blessed!

But, there is the clinical side of the subject to which I have already alluded. Jesus in His method of treating the doubt of Thomas, is training him and his brother disciples as Apostle-physicians. Thomas is the subject through whose treatment He is training the Twelve in the treatment of like souls in the future. He is bidding them through His own patient bearing with the doubts of Thomas, to be tender and patient with the doubts of others who may come to them in their cure of souls. He is saying to them, “Give all the evidence within your power to those whose faith has suffered a temporary eclipse. Bear with their despondent temperaments if you are sure that they want to believe, but can’t because of the slavery of temperament. Don’t turn them away because like Thomas they cannot believe as quickly or with as slight evidence as has been sufficient for the rest of you. Nurse them back to a life of robust faith, a faith that can say with Thomas, in adoring reverence, ‘My Lord and my God!’ You are only to turn away from those whose unbelief is the result of their willful disobedience to the moral law. Then no evidence which you can give them will suffice to satisfy their unbelief; ‘for if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead.’ Follow My example in giving to Thomas the utmost evidence that he demanded, though I have refused an iota of evidence to those who sought My death, and have striven to conceal My resurrection. But strive always to make men feel that the surest and most incontrovertible, as well as the most blessed, evidence is that which comes of the unseen but personal experience of the individual soul through communion and fellowship with God by His Spirit.”

If I were speaking to a company of those whose position was that of clergymen in the Church and pastors of Christ’s flock, the physicians of the soul to whom the work of Christ is especially entrusted, I think I should

urge them to lay the chief emphasis upon the value of the unseen evidences of the reality of religious truth. There is evidence enough of the tangible kind of the sure foundations of Christianity in the miraculous Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, and of the presence of God in the world, to satisfy any devout soul who wants to believe. But these evidences and proofs vary in the terms of their statement with the ages of thought and the findings of human science. There is just one thing, one sort of evidence that does not change, it is the same yesterday, today and forever – the evidence, of the personal experience of the individual soul. That is why the Psalms have their message for every age and for every soul: they are the record of the unchanging communion of the individual soul with God. That is why Jesus Christ, as He is revealed in the Gospels, does not change in His power to minister to the needs of every age and every soul: He is the recognized Physician of the soul. The soul bears its own witness and carries its own blessing within its possession, if it will grasp it, in that “not having seen,” it possesses the power to believe. The Faith of the Creeds and its method of statement may change with the changing phases of human thought; it is a form of faith and therefore transient: but the inner experience of the soul, faith itself, does not change, it is the life; it is permanent. Teach men so. Make them look within for the witness to the soul’s relationship with God; urge them to keep the ear of the soul open to the voices that are never silent therein unless they are drowned by the din of the outside world; help them to cultivate the spiritual faculties as sedulously as they care for their bodies or educate their minds. And never will those, the cure of whose souls His ministers are responsible for, lose their grasp of the meaning of the great Physician’s words to Thomas, – “Blessed are those who have not seen; and yet have believed.”

### XXIII – The Apostle Peter

“He saith unto him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, ‘Lovest thou Me?’ And he said unto Him, ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ Jesus &aid unto him, ‘Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say onto thee, When thou wast young, thou girded thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt

stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” – John 21:17–18.

HERE again, I believe, we are present at a clinic. Jesus is treating what He knew to be the needs of His disciple; but He is also training Peter and the rest of the Twelve to be apostles, and physicians of the souls of those to whom He was sending them. If in His treatment of the doubt of Thomas He was teaching them that the ministry of His Church was to be a ministry of *faith* in Him, He is training them now in the idea that it is also to be a ministry of *love* for Him, of absolute loyalty, of complete consecration, of unshrinking obedience to every call of love or duty in the ministry to which He had called them.

Let us look first at His treatment of the individual. Our minds revert to the words with which Jesus met Simon, when first He called him to be His disciple. Then He gave him a new name, a stimulus to his weakness, a goad to spur him on to his highest endeavor. Now He calls him by his old name, as though to remind him of his old weakness, so lately evident in his threefold denial in the court of the High Priest’s palace. And with the reminder, that must have struck home to the heart of Peter, as he hears the old name – the name which Jesus used once before when He warned him of his denial – Jesus gives him the opportunity which his heart must have craved, for a threefold confession of love. Peter needed both the reminder and the opportunity for confessing the love which never for a moment had ceased to beat within his heart. He needed to be reminded that though a man’s nature changes with his ideals, the change is not complete at once: he carries within him remnants of the old self against which he must still fight. The old impulsive impetuosity, which acts before it thinks, had just manifested itself in the eagerness with which Peter had thrown aside his fisher’s coat to fling himself into the sea, and be the first to throw himself at the feet of his risen Lord. The clinging hold of the old life had just shown itself in the eagerness with which he had said, “I go a-fishing,” and had launched out with his nets and his boat, to take up the old occupation which he had past aside years before at the call of Jesus.

There was need for the balancing of the hold which these old occupations and associations had upon the heart of Peter with the claims which his apostleship had – for the last test to which Jesus should put his love. So Jesus – waiting until after the meal, until after the first flood of affectionate demonstration had subsided – waving His hand towards the

symbols and ties of the old life, searches the heart of Peter and probes his attachments, saying, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" The answer that comes from the quivering lips of Peter, is enough to prove to Him that the reversion of His disciple to the old ties was but a passing response to the call of the old life, the sort of response which might have been looked for on the part of the most loyal follower of a cause, in the interval of uncertainty and idleness between the shock which had separated the disciples from their Master and their renewal of consecration to the life whose new duties they were only waiting to have defined. And the question, which comes the second and the third time from the lips of Jesus, is an acceptance of the loyalty of Peter to Him as compared with any lingering attachment which the old life still had, and a weighing of the strength of the love and loyalty which Peter had for Himself. It is as if Jesus had said, "Are you sure that when the stress of trial and temptation, which must come in the years before you, is sore, when the strife is fierce, the conflict long," when "others shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not, that then thou wilt not deny Me again, or be untrue to the ministry and apostleship to which thou art called and sealed?"

And the answer of Peter is as satisfactory to Jesus, as His questions were searching. Peter answers the last question in which Jesus' one object seems to be to sound the depths of his loyalty to Himself, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!" As though he had said, "Thou knowest my weaknesses, Thou knowest how often my performance has fallen short of my professions, how I boldly declared that I would lay down my life for Thy sake and then turned and denied Thee with cursing and swearing; yet with all this Thou knowest that my heart has ever been true to Thee, whatever my conduct. I ask that I be judged by the loyalty of my love, and not by the consistency under all circumstances of my conduct."

And Jesus accepts his professions on that ground, providing at the same time for the strengthening and endurance of Peter's love by its exercise in a ministry of Love. "Feed My sheep, feed My Lambs, feed My sheep," He replies to each of His disciple's passionate declarations of love and loyalty; as though He would keep the spring of his affections clear and living and free from stagnation by the constant overflow for which He provided in the ministry of Peter to the wants of others.

The test to which Jesus puts Peter is reassuring in the extreme to all who having sinned need the assurance that though they have sinned they have not been utterly cast off. Marcus Dods says of Jesus' treatment of Peter on this occasion, "In this restoration of Peter, our Lord, then, tests not the conduct, but the heart. He recognizes that while the conduct is the legitimate and normal test of a man's feeling, yet there are times at which it is fair and useful to examine the heart itself apart from present manifestations of its condition; and that the solace which a poor soul gets after great sin, in refusing to attempt to show the consistency of his conduct with love to Christ, and in clinging simply to the consciousness that with all his sin there is still love in his heart for Him, is a solace sanctioned by Christ, and which He would have it enjoy. This is encouraging, because a Christian is often conscious that, if he is to be judged solely by his conduct, he must be condemned. He is conscious of blemishes in his life that seem quite to contradict the idea that he is animated by a regard for Christ. He knows that men who see his infirmities and outbreaks may be justified in supposing him to be a self-deceived or pretentious hypocrite, and yet in his own soul he is conscious of love to Christ. He can as little doubt this as he can doubt that he has shamefully denied this in his conduct. He would rather be judged by omniscience than by a judgment that can scrutinize only his outward conduct. He appeals in his own heart from those who know in part to Him who knows all things. He knows perfectly well that if men are to be expected to believe that he is a Christian he must prove this by his conduct; nay, he understands that love must find for itself a constant and consistent expression in conduct; but it remains an indubitable satisfaction to be conscious that, despite all his conduct has said to the contrary, he does in his soul love the Lord."

In supplying the needs of the individual here, Jesus also lays down one of the prime requirements for the successful prosecution of the ministry of His Church to the needs of the world. He is training the Twelve to be Apostles of the faith and physicians of the souls of men. Perhaps the requirement which He here lays down is the first requirement of Christianity, and indeed of all religion. John Watson in "The Mind of the Master" makes "devotion to a person the dynamic of religion". He says, "The final test of any religion is its inherent spiritual dynamic: the force of Christianity is the pledge of its success. It is not a school of morals, nor a system of speculation, it is an *enthusiasm*." Jesus bases the whole future of

His kingdom, the whole success of His successors in their ministry to the needs of the world upon their love for Him, their enthusiasm for the cause to which they had consecrated themselves. He exacts no promise from them, He requires no subscription to elaborate articles of religion, He lays down no rules of order for the government of His Church: whatever He *may* have taught His Apostles concerning such things during those Forty Days, the Gospels are silent about. This we know, – that He strove to make sure of their *love* for Himself. Knowing perhaps, that given this, all the other essentials of success in the organization of His Church, the propagation of His Gospel, the continuance of its polity, the reverence and dignity of worship, would come as the natural fruitage of their love.

And that was to be their method of winning the world: by getting hold of its heart and attaching it to Christ, by proving to men the love of Christ for them through the love of His followers: as pastors of the flock of Christ, by feeding His sheep and lambs that they in turn might know the love of the great Shepherd of the sheep and “love Him because He first loved them”; as physicians of the soul, by healing the infirmities of men through the power and grace given unto them by the great Physician; “by love unfeigned” warming into glowing enthusiasm and loyal devotion the hearts of men towards Him “Whom not having seen they love.”

This is to love Christ, as He would have us love Him for the salvation of our own souls, and for the imparting of that salvation to others. There can be no self-reservation. “This new affection must command the whole life and the whole nature. No more can the man spend himself in self-chosen activities, in girding himself for great deeds of individual glorification, or in walking in ways that promise pleasure or profit to self; he willingly stretches forth his hands, and is carried to much that flesh and blood shrink from, but which is all made inevitable, welcomed and blessed to him through the joy of that love that has appointed it.”

## XXIV – John, the Beloved Disciple

“Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what shall this man do?’ Jesus saith unto him, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.’” – John 21:21–22.

JOHN has been called the Apostle of love. And the designation is an apt one. No one could have lived as closely as did John to the heart and mind of Jesus, none of the disciples could have been singled out as was

John, as the beloved disciple, without also becoming an Apostle of love. But he was also, and preeminently among the disciples, the apostle of hope. Hope is the child of faith and love. If, as Drummond has said, *love* is “the greatest thing in the world,” it is equally true that *faith* is the *first* thing; a truth confirmed by St. Paul when he writes, “Now abideth faith, hope and charity; but the greatest of these is charity”; and of these two *faith*, the strong, self-reliant father, and *love*, the patient, self-sacrificing mother – is born the sunny bright-eyed child, *hope*.

We have seen how Jesus trained His disciples through the example which He made of Thomas in the exercise of faith; how He tested their loyalty, and emphasized the need of love in His last question and commission to Peter: in the incident and words of Jesus now before us we have an instance of the training of the Twelve, in His last spiritual clinic, to appreciate the necessity of that quality of character which “maketh not ashamed – hope.”

The question of Peter, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” – which drew from our Lord the counter question, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? – is not, as to its form at least, an unworthy or unwarranted question. The desire, which it voices, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the race. It is what differentiates man from the merely animal creation. That he is conscious of a future, and that his supreme interest is in it; whether that future is bounded by time and the world’s stage for its fulfillment; or whether it stretches out into that dim beyond of which the world’s sphere is but the tiring chamber – the interest in its secrets is not less marked. Even the physician of the body cannot be altogether indifferent to the relations of that unseen spirit which lurks within the temple of the body, and makes its influence felt, looking for its perfect realization to a life which lies beyond the endurance of the decaying tissues which constitute the chief interest of the physician of the body.

The point of man’s departure from the animal world is, that man is interested, is anxious about the future. That he feels that his day and generation, the life of the body, is not sufficient for the realization or completion of his plans in their fullness. That in his moments of clearest vision and deepest insight he realizes that not even this world with all its ages is sufficient for the attainment of the farthest goal of success.

It is this sense of insufficiency, coupled with a feeling of wonder, which furnishes one of the strongest sources of stimulus to men: that so

often inspires them to satisfy an idle curiosity, and leads them on to find the chief blessing of life. Just as within the breast of the explorer, the adventurer, the conqueror, the scientist, aye, even the philanthropist and the religionist, there is a curious impulse to investigation and experiment, resulting finally in new lands for cultivation, new races for civilization, new principles for the convenience and enrichment of life, new methods of reform and social betterment, new systems for the healing of life's diseases, new revelations of God's truth for the salvation and consolation of the world's degraded and distressed.

At its best, this restlessly inquiring spirit is closely akin to that faith which the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews defines as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is the first stage of that faith by which Abraham, the patriarchal adventurer, left the home of his fathers, and "went out, not knowing whither he went. For he was *looking for* the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It had its part in the inspiration of the faith of the Apostle Paul, when in obedience to the Macedonian cry for help, he loosed from the shores of known lands, parted with his companions in the churches he had founded, and braved the untried dangers and faced the strange peoples of a new country. Is it unworthy of this patriarch and this apostle of an old and new faith, to say that mixed with devotion to duty and obedience to the beloved will of God, there was the stimulating zest of wanting to know and try new fields and new experiences? I think not.

Nor do I think that our Lord's rebuke, undoubtedly implied in His answer to Peter – "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me" was based upon the *form* of Peter's question, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" It was based rather upon the *animus* of the question. The quietly loving, serenely meditative life of John did not appeal to Peter's restless, aggressively active spirit. John was not *doing* anything. From Peter's viewpoint, he had not been given anything to do. In Peter's estimation, "the meek and quiet spirit" of one who contributed nothing to the world's wealth or the world's health, was an idle spirit. A ministry of hope, the contribution of the dreamer and seer of life's mysteries, had no place, in Peter's estimation, in the cure of souls to which all had been called.

There has always been this misunderstanding on the part of the so-called workers of the world of the so-called men of leisure. But is the

depreciation of leisure just? Without estimating the value that accrues to the world through the consecrated leisure of its students, artists, writers, prophets, is the strain of the contemplative life less than that of the actively aggressive?

Listen to the side of leisure, beautifully put by one of the so-called leisure class: “While I sit at my study table with my pen in hand, the fingers moving with tardy pace at the beckon of brain, I hear right below my window in the adjacent field, the monotonous ring of a laborer’s hoe upon the corn hills. While he hoes, he whistles hour by hour, until the clock strikes twelve, and then with ravenous appetite repairs to his simple yet bountiful meal, only to resume his task again and pursue it to the setting of the sun. As I stood at my window watching his toil, and turned again to my pen and paper, I asked myself how it happened that the man with the hoe will labor his eight or ten hours a day with less fatigue than the man with his pen will toil his three or four. Hugh Miller was a great worker with the shovel and pick – would have made a good hand in a slate quarry, in grading a railroad, or digging a canal. But one night, he shot himself in a fit of nervous fever. What was the difference between this great geologist and the man with the hoe whistling under my window? Simply this: the former was a worker of brain, and the latter a worker of muscle. Let this man with the hoe lay down his husbandry for a little while and set himself to studying one of the stalks of corn, or the chemistry of one of these hills of soil, and very likely he would soon learn what it is to lose one’s appetite, and hear the clock strike nearly all the night hours in feverish wakefulness. And thus we get a great law of our being, to wit: that brain work subtracts vitality from the fountain, while muscle work only makes draughts upon one of the ramifying streams of life. It is estimated by scientific observers that a man will use up as much vital force in working his brains *two* hours as he will in working his muscles *eight*.”

Perhaps to Peter in his active, strenuous labor among men, it may have seemed that the life of John, the seer and historiographer of the life and teaching of the Lord, was one of quiet restfulness and unbroken calm in its contemplation of the glory of the Christ-life and the beauty of heavenly truth. But what student can read the Gospels and the Revelation of St. John, without realizing how the brain and heart of the Apostle travailed in the birth-throes of those marvelous records and conceptions? As he wrote with his heart-blood the story of that life which had been snatched from him by

death with all its accompanying horrors; as he lay upon the Isle of Patmos, and felt his whole nature flame in the presence of the Shining One, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace; as he beheld in his visions the worlds wrapped in flames, and witnessed the death throes of the nations? As he strains his eyes to catch every gleam from the walls of the new Jerusalem of a redeemed society; and his ears to catch the answer to the “voice upon the slope” that cries to the summit of human aspiration, “Is there any hope?” and his mind to interpret the answer which

“pealed from that high land,  
But in a tongue no man could understand;  
When on the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn?” –

can one doubt after such a study the travail of St. John’s soul?

If it be the Lord’s will that Peter shall work for His kingdom, as men count work, and die a cruel death at the close of life; what is he doing more than John, whose destiny is that he shall live on, through sunshine and shadow, and speak for the same Lord to ages yet unborn, renewing their flagging energies, strengthening their feeble faith, inspiring their dying hopes, ending his days in a serene old age, leaving an example to those who without hope are yet led to believe in hope?

That is the lesson which Jesus taught His disciples, and leaves to you, in this answer which He gives to the question of Peter – the value of hope, and of the apostles of hope, in the cure of souls. You are not to grow weary in your vigil over the world’s redemption, or over the life of him who is weakened and debased by his slavery to sin and vice; you are not to be deceived by the outward appearances in the world and in men that seem to tell of their hopeless degeneracy. If you have *faith* – faith in the almighty power and love of God and His Son Jesus Christ; if you have *love* – love for Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, and not for you only but for the whole world: of these two shall be begotten *hope* – the hope, which when His purpose is accomplished, shall not make you ashamed.

## Epilogue

### XXV – The Healing of the Nations

“And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” – Revelation 22:2.

THE vision of St. John is the vision of a redeemed society. It is the last chapter in the history of the race of which the book of Genesis is the first chapter. It is a vision of Paradise Regained, as Genesis is the record of a Paradise Lost. We find in it therefore what we should expect to find, the recovery of that which was lost, the same familiar elements and features in the vision which were in the possession of the race before it was dispossessed in the long and painful tragedy of sin. The tree which stood in the midst of the Garden of the Eden of man's innocence stands in the midst of the City of the New Jerusalem of man's redemption. The spiritual, mental, physical life and health, the right to which man lost by sin, is found again through obedience. That, in part at least, is the meaning of the Tree of Life which John saw in his vision of the new Jerusalem, with its fruits for the feeding and its leaves for the healing of the nations.

The redeemed individual has multiplied himself into a redeemed society, the single unit, who found in Jesus the great Physician life and health and strength again, has grown into the race which at last realizes its destiny through the Cross of Christ: He who said, "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me," fulfills His prophecy through the transformation of the instrument of His death into a Tree of Life for the race – that is the vision of the seer of what shall be when the Divine purpose is fulfilled.

We have been studying Christ's treatment of the individual; we are given a vision here of Christ's redemption of society. The cure of souls is to be realized in the health of souls, restoration to life by the eradication of the cause of its marring or ruin – *sin*.

Let us look first at the spectacle which human society presents now, even at the end of nineteen centuries, under the saving influence of the Cross of Christ. The picture presented to us of life in the various spheres of the race's experience today in their weaknesses, their imperfections, their perils, is still a gloomy one. The Church is still but a mere symbol of the perfected life of society as it shall be when the Divine plan and purpose shall be fulfilled. It is still much the same as it was when Jesus the great Physician ministered in the cure of souls on earth, of which ministry to scattered individuals here and there He said, "I tell you of a truth, *many* widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, ... but unto *none* of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a *woman* that was a widow. And *many* lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and *none* of them was cleansed, saving *Naaman* the Syrian." It is true that

in the eyes of the present, the race at times in the past seems to have stood with its feet almost on the shining threshold of its final destiny; but almost always the present, lacking the illusion which time throws over grim fact, lacking also the charity for itself which the present always has for the past when it stands face to face with the evils of its own times, when it marks how these evils retard the progress of the race, when it stands in their very presence and sees the way in which the devils of lust and greed, of passion and selfishness, which have entered into the life of the race, have torn it and driven it to dwell in the tombs of dead ideals and murdered hopes – the present grows despondent and despairs of ever winning the goal. It seems almost as though the best we may ever hope for is the healing of an individual here and there, and never the healing of the nations.

Yet such was not the spirit of Christ, who, though He looked upon the city of His hopes and wept over it, never lost His confidence in the final glory of the Holy City of redeemed society for which the Jerusalem of history stood; who, though He was baffled in His cure of souls by the incurable obduracy of the Judases, the Pilates and the Herods of His ministry, never relinquished His plan for the healing of the nations of which the healing of the individual was the prophecy. Such was not the vision of St. John who, amidst the ruins of the earthly Jerusalem, saw looming out of the future of the Divine plan and purpose, the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; who, amidst the ravages of sin and sickness and suffering, confidently spoke of the time when “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Such a spirit of hopeless despondency will not be ours, if back of the sins and weaknesses, we have faith in Christ and His Cross, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations, and with fervent prayer and faithful service we keep the high hope and unwavering courage of the poet who wrote:

“History’s pages but record

One death grapple in the darkness, ’twixt old systems and the word.

Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne:

But that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.”

For surely the new Jerusalem of St. John’s vision is something more than that of a home beyond the skies, an ethereal City into which shall be gathered the souls of a faithful few out of the race, the scattered remnants of the nations. Is it not rather the image of a redeemed society on earth, the earth which we know, the earth of our hopes and our fears, of our joys and our sorrows, of our burdens and aspirations – our present dwelling place, this old earth purged of the sins of the race – which shall be perfected and made new when God’s purpose, which has been delayed, but never abandoned through all the ages, shall at last be accomplished? Is it not the image of a redeemed society coextensive with the Church which is now but the symbol of God’s purpose for humanity, coextensive also with the race which now groaneth and travaileth together with the whole creation, out of both of which the old, decaying, enfeebling elements shall be swept away, but in which shall be kept and perfected all that constitutes the real life of human society? In which the sweetness of things which have been loved and familiar, shall blend with the charm of all that is fresh and new in the new life, which shall carry into it the character, the associations, the substance of all that man “has loved long since and lost awhile.” Just as the center and source of the light and life and joy of the New Jerusalem was seen by the seer to be the Lamb who was slain on earth, and who now sits upon the throne, the Christ who carried into the new life the humanity which He bore on earth, with its memories, its triumphs, its character, yea, even the wound prints and spear thrust and thorn marks, as the signs of His glory and His power; so shall humanity carry into its new existence all that has been won of Christlikeness, all which it was meant to be from the beginning and had failed in being through the ages, but wins at last by its obedience to and Incarnation of Christ in human life. Just as the tree of life, which stands for the perfection of life and was lost by man’s sin in his primal history, shall stand at last in the midst of the city of his perfected life, with its fruits for the feeding and its leaves for the healing of the nations, when they shall enter in to go no more out of it forever.

And the hope of that life, what is it based upon? The power which shall bring about and sustain such a state of redeemed society, whence comes it? St. John in his vision saw the new Jerusalem, not rising out of the earth but coming down from God out of heaven. The world will never

evolve of itself a golden age or ideal state: it must descend from God. Religion is the only regenerative force. The religion of the heart and will and life: the religion that is described by the prophet Micah, when he asks the question, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" The religion which St. Paul defines, when he writes to the Corinthians, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new." The religion which is at the heart of things, rather than of the things themselves; the religion which, though it may dwell in the outward shells and forms of Church government and sacraments and ceremonial and creeds, is not confined by them, but loves to dwell wherever there is willing heart and soul to receive it.

The world has ever sought, as it is seeking still, to bring in its golden age itself, to bring up the new Jerusalem out of its own life; and the world has always failed. Patriarchies have yielded to monarchies, monarchies have given place to republics, and republics to communes; and communes have passed into anarchy, again and again in the world's history. Society has changed her autocracies into aristocracies; and aristocracies have died, and democracies have taken their place; only to pass back into aristocracies of a new form and with new distinctions. The Church changed its apostolate into an hierarchy, and its hierarchy into episcopacy, and episcopacy was succeeded by a presbytery, only to be remodeled into congregationalism, or to degenerate into individualism. And in each change men dreamed that they had a vision of the new Jerusalem, of a redeemed national or social or ecclesiastical society. But when have they not been obliged to abandon the hope, so soon as the spirit of love in the family, of justice in the nation, of righteousness in society, or of holiness in the Church, each of which is an expression of the spirit of religion, has fallen into disuse or died out of the outward institution? What of good, what towards hastening the coming of the ideal state, have they ever done, that was not inspired or imparted by religion? The new Jerusalem shall come down from God out of heaven or not at all. Religion has been the source and power of every regeneration in the past, is now and ever shall be, until God's purpose is fulfilled – the regeneration of the race, the redemption of society.

And the power that lies back of such regeneration and redemption, that shall secure its permanence when once it is realized, where is it? But in the Throne which is raised above all, upon which sitteth One, "as it were a

Lamb that had been slain”? The instrument of the power, what is its symbol? But the Cross upon which He was “offered for the sins of the whole world” – the Tree of Life whose “leaves are for the healing of the nations”?

No one listening to the average preaching of the day can fail to be struck with the fact that an element in the preaching of the Cross of Christ, that once marked the preaching of the past, and was almost its only note, seemingly with wonderful efficacy in the cure of souls, is today practically absent or so faint as hardly to be noticed in the fuller presentation and application of the Cross, as the symbol of human service and of Jesus as the example of human endeavor and the type of human perfection. If that element was a mistaken element in the system of healing which Jesus practiced and commended to His Church, then the sooner it was or is discarded the better. If the Church of the past mistook the meaning of her great Physician, if she read awrong the meaning of His successors, and chiefest of all, St. Paul, in their passionate advocacy of the Cross of Christ as sacrifice *for* sin; then, the sooner the Church of the present discards this element of what has been described as a survival of the crude conceptions of Divine justice and Divine love set forth in Jewish and heathen sacrifice, the clearer her ministry will be able to sound the note which the so-called New Theology conceives to be the mind of Christ.

But if on the other hand –while admitting that much of the preaching of the past was crude in its conceptions of the meaning of the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin; while admitting that in the main the prevailing note was of a mechanical and juridical rather than of a vital and mediatorial efficacy; while admitting that, even in the case of those who held the latter view, it was exploited to such an extent as to lose sight of the exemplary and inspirational character of that sacrifice – we are sure from a restudy of the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, as well as from the results of such preaching, that even the crudest understanding of the meaning of Christ possessed an efficacy in its presentation that nothing else supplies – then surely it would be well for us to take heed lest in our zeal for the Truth, we destroy in part the efficacy of the Truth, and so lose in part the power which Jesus possessed in the cure of souls.

In the story of one of our Lord’s acts of healing, we are told that a woman but touched the hem of His garment, and was straightway healed. And that Jesus perceived that virtue had gone forth from Him. No word was

spoken by Him, no intelligent appeal to the faith of the woman was made, nothing was evident as the means of her cure except that she had touched Him. Something like this seems to be true of the efficacy of the preaching of the Cross as a sacrifice *for* sin.

There seems to be the need in the sin-stricken consciousness of humanity for the assurance of atonement through sacrifice, a demand for a sacrificial victim “as it were a Lamb that was slain.” And, wherever this view of Christ’s sacrifice has been preached, virtue has gone forth from it: men who have not been saved by His life *are* reconciled by His death; and being healed of their spiritual sickness have gone forth to live in the power of His life. If sin is only arrested development, His example would be sufficient inspiration to lead men to higher things; but, if it is a sickness unto death, only the remedy of His atoning death can raise them from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. The leaves of the tree must be bruised before they are applied to the wound: the leaves of the Tree of Life, the Cross of Christ, are the broken Body and shed Blood of Him who was “bruised for our transgressions” as the “one, full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” How and why, we know not. We only know that it is so; and the witness of the ages past is proof of the fact imperfectly realized, as the witness of unborn ages will be the final confirmation of the truth, when they who know in part shall know even as they are known, and the leaves of the tree shall have accomplished the healing of the nations.

Until then –

O Saving Victim, opening wide  
The gate of heaven to man below,  
Our foes press on from every side,  
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

All praise and thanks to Thee ascend  
For evermore, blest One in Three;  
Oh, grant us life that shall not end,  
In our true native land with Thee.