



# PRACTICAL STUDIES

IN THE

# FOURTH GOSPEL

BY WARREN A. CANDLER, D.D., LL.D.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John xx. 30 and 31.)

*VOLUME I.*

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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IN the preparation of these "Practical Studies in the Fourth Gospel" the Johannine authorship of the Gospel has been assumed. The main facts, admitted by all parties who have contributed to the abundant literature of the subject, seem to justify, if not to compel, this conclusion. Accepting this view of the subject, the author offers nothing of an apologetic nature in the pages which follow. Nor is anything critical or exegetical proposed. Exegetical investigations have not been neglected, but only practical results of such work are set forth in these studies.

The first volume treats the first ten chapters of the Gospel. The remaining chapters will be discussed in the second volume, which is in course of preparation.

St. John explicitly declares that his object in writing the fourth Gospel was that his readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing they might have life through his name." (John xx. 31.) The writer of these "Practical Studies" prays that his imperfect work may quicken the same faith in the hearts of any who may read these expositions.



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I.

**THE WORD MADE FLESH; OR, LESSONS  
FROM THE INCARNATION.**

1

## JOHN I. 1-18.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

16 And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

## I.

### THE WORD MADE FLESH; OR, LESSONS FROM THE INCARNATION.

THE four evangelists give us portraitures of one and the same Jesus, the Christ; but each represents him from a different point of view, with different lights and shadows, and with a different perspective. Matthew, writing for Hebrew Christians, begins with tracing his descent from Abraham, the father and founder of the Hebrew nation; Mark, writing for Roman Christians, presents him apart from all antecedents and genealogies, showing himself very God and very man by the deeds that he wrought as the wonder-working Son of God; St. Luke, who wrote the Gospel for the Gentiles, sets him forth in his relations to all humanity, tracing his genealogy to Adam and revealing him as the Saviour of the whole world; St. John, writing as if from the very bosom of the Father, connects him with the Eternal, and relates him to the deepest needs of the soul. From this loftiest point of view, the author of the Fourth

Gospel sees him in “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was” (chapter xvii. 5), marks his mediatorial movement through creation, providence, and redemption, and sets forth his cosmic connections. In this Gospel there is a sublimity of thought and a majesty of movement not found in the Synoptic Gospels. Its opening words sound like an echo of the first lines of the book of Genesis: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” The strains of the angels of the advent, which St. Luke caught and recorded, do not rise to the height of these declarations. The simple but sublime words show us the Incarnate One coming into our world through the gates of the morning, radiant with the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father, “full of grace and truth.”

1. *The historical Jesus was very God as well as very man.* “What think ye of Christ?” is the supreme question in Christianity. False views of him make history inexplicable, providence insoluble, and salvation impossible. (a) He

must be known as the Eternal One. "In the beginning" he already "was"; and there was never a moment when he began to be. (b) While he is eternal, the person of the Son of God cannot be lost in the person of the Father; "He was *with* God." When the distinction of persons in the Trinity is denied, there is no basis left for the great truth that "God is love"; for there must be more than one person, if love is to exist. God cannot from eternity have been a Father, if there was no eternal Son. But the Son was not, and is not, inferior to the Father. (c) The Word, who was "in the beginning *with* God," "*was* God." John claims no more for his Master than the Lord claimed for himself; for he said, "before Abraham was, I am" (chapter viii. 58), suggesting the words of the great revelation of God to Moses: "I Am That I Am" (Ex. iii. 14). And again: "I and my Father are one" (chapter x. 30). This mystery of the Godhead is beyond our feeble understanding. John, a Galilean fisherman, could never have invented so transcendent a truth as that of the Trinity. He was no dreamy metaphysician, evolving a theory of the divine, but a plain man who derived his doctrine from facts of experience; not bending the facts to his doctrine,

## 6 *Reverent Induction from Revealed Facts.*

but conforming his doctrine to the facts. This is his own account of the process by which he reached his conclusions: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (John i. 1-3.) The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the conclusion reached from a process of reverent induction applied to revealed facts. The apostles and the primitive Church had neither the disposition nor the ability to have invented it; but seeing in Christ an unmistakably divine Person, hearing him pray to the Father and claim Sonship for himself, and receiving from him the promise of the Comforter, who came to them as the Holy Spirit, they were constrained by the facts to believe in a Trinity, or to surrender their Jewish monotheism for a pagan tritheism. What they thus learned by experience is found at last to be a necessity of thought, if men are to save from utter extinction their faith in a personal God. We must deny the existence

of a personal God of love, or accept the doctrine of the Trinity. Very truly says St. Bernard: "It is rashness to search too far into it. It is piety to believe it. It is life eternal to know it. And we can never have a full comprehension of it till we come to enjoy it."

2. *The Son of God, who became incarnate, was the Mediator of creation, as well as the Author of redemption.* "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." To the same effect speaks St. Paul in the Colossian Epistle: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth. . . . All things were created *by* him, and *for* him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) "What sweetness and what reverential awe such thoughts should cast around the outer world and the providences of life! How near they should bring Jesus Christ to us! What a wonderful thought that is, that the whole course of human affairs and natural processes is directed by him who died upon the cross! The helm of the universe is held by the hands which were pierced for us. The Lord of nature and the Mover of all things is that Saviour on whose love we may pillow our ach-



ing heads.” (Alexander Maclaren.) At the center of the universe is a heart of infinite love as well as an intelligence of infinite wisdom and a will of infinite power.

3. *The Son of God, who became incarnate, is the Source of the life and light of men.* “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” “He is the eternal Fountain from which alone the sons of men have ever derived life. Whatever spiritual life and light Adam and Eve had before the fall was from Christ. Whatever deliverance from sin and spiritual death any child of Adam has ever enjoyed since the fall, whatever light of conscience or understanding any one has obtained—all has flowed from Christ. The vast majority of mankind in every age have refused to know him, have forgotten the fall and their own need of a Saviour. The light has been constantly shining ‘in darkness.’ The most have ‘not comprehended the light.’ But if any men and women out of the countless millions of mankind have ever had any spiritual life and light, they have owed it all to Christ.” (Canon J. C. Ryle.)

4. *The greatest and best of men, even John the Baptist, of whom the Master said there was never greater born of woman, cannot be the*

*source of divine revelation.* They can only bear witness to the light; they cannot create it. Each Christly man is sent from God to bear witness to the true light, but not to claim light in himself. Between Jesus, "the Light of the World," and the loftiest of the sons of men there is an immeasurable distance. Wherefore said John the Baptist: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me." Moses was immeasurably below him; for "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Church can be the light of the world only as it derives light from him. Illumined by him, it becomes "a light shining in a dark place," "a city set on a hill that cannot be hid." (2 Pet. i. 19 and Matt. v. 14-16.)

5. *Perfect as is the revelation of God in Christ, it is not a light which coerces men; they may reject it or accept it.* The world that was made by him, and in which he was, "knew him not"; and when he came to his own Israel, to whom he had given special disclosures of heavenly truth, "his own received him not." Men are not lost for lack of light, but for lack of love and obedience to the light they have; and they are not saved by the abundance of the

light *they have*, but by the light *they use*. All have had light enough for salvation, and are without excuse if they are unsaved. "So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." (Rom. i. 20, 21.) Compare also Luke xvi. 31 and John xv. 24. The chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees had all the light that John and Peter had, but it profited them nothing.

6. *The revelation of God in Christ is a life-giving revelation when it is received by faith.* To as many as receive him he gives "power to become the sons of God." The *light* that is in our incarnate Lord issues from the *life* that is in him, and it produces life of the same quality in the souls of them who open their hearts to it. He does not come to gratify curiosity about supernatural things, but to impart supernatural life; and the truth as it is in Jesus establishes its claim to divine origin by the divine life which springs from it. The kind of life which he imparts cannot be derived from any earthly source nor developed by any process of flesh and blood. It comes not by human descent nor by human desire nor by human power, but is the gift of God. "I am come that

they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John x. 10.)

7. *Through the incarnation the divine presence is realized among men.* “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us [*“pitched his tent among us”*], and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” “By the word ‘dwelt’ John links the body of Christ to the ancient dwelling of God — the Tabernacle — around which the tents of Israel had clustered. God now dwelt among men in the tabernacle of the humanity of Jesus Christ. The tabernacle was human; the indwelling Person was divine. In Christ is realized the actual presence of God among his people, the actual entrance into and personal participation in human history, which was hinted at in the tabernacle and the temple.” (Marcus Dods.) In the revelation of Patmos, John was given a vision of the culmination of the purpose of the incarnation in human history. “And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, *the tabernacle of God* is with men, and he will

*dwell with them*, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Rev. xxi. 2, 3.) The best possession of the human soul is the indwelling God, and the crowning day of history will come when all souls shall thus possess him, whom to know is life eternal.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” Following the Son by faith, the race of redeemed men shall finally come to the vision of the unveiled face of God, and dwell with him in the heavenly and churchless city, needing no intermeditation of temple or service as a means of approach to him, and being “forever with the Lord.” “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.” (Rev. xxi. 22-25.)

II.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

JOHN I. 19-34.

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

## II.

### JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS.

JESUS testified of John the Baptist that he was the greatest of men born of women, and in this passage John testified that Jesus was more than a man. Jewish leaders, who opposed Jesus, drew this testimony from the preacher in the desert. His testimony was more than they expected or desired. It is more conclusive to us because it was not conformed to their desires.

1. *The efforts of the enemies of the truth as it is in Jesus often result in the most convincing proofs in favor of Christ and Christianity.* The deputation sent from Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin to question John brought out the wonderful testimony which is recorded in this passage. No human testimony to Christ's divinity could be higher than that of the prophet of the wilderness. He was the sternest of monotheists, and nothing short of the voice of God could have induced him to accept as divine one coming in the form of a man. He had nothing to gain and everything to lose by testifying that



Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of God," if his testimony was not true; for the more he testified to the fact, the more would he induce his adherents to forsake him and follow the Messiah whom he pointed out to them. Some of John's disciples did feel a touch of jealousy toward the success of Jesus; but in the triumph of his Lord he himself declared that his mission was accomplished, saying, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." (Chapter iii. 25-30.)

2. *The most convincing testimony amounts to nothing when the mind is made up to reject the truth.* The priests and the Levites who questioned John went away without accepting Christ. They were not seeking truth, but seeking support for their own predetermined conclusions. No amount of proof—not the resurrection itself—was sufficient to convince them. If men hear not Moses and the prophets, who testify of Christ, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead. (Luke xvi. 31.) With the Messiah standing among them and the prophet of the wilderness pointing them to him, these men knew him not. They could not discern him, because they did not desire him.

3. *John's testimony was the result of experi-*

*ence, unaffected by pride and uninfluenced by prejudice.* The divine character and Messianic office of Jesus had been revealed to him by the voice from heaven and the descent of the Spirit (verses 30-34). He bore record that Jesus was the Son of God, because he *saw* (verse 34), and not because of any previous knowledge or prepossession as to his divine nature and authority. Before such majesty he bowed himself in reverent adoration, confessing that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of his Master's shoes. He acknowledged that his own authority to baptize with water, calling the nation to repentance, was derived from Him who was able to baptize with the life-giving baptism of the Holy Ghost; and that upon this mission he had been sent, because the Christ had come. By prophetic insight he perceived and proclaimed the eternal preëxistence of him who had come and who was standing among them, saying: "He is preferred before me, for he *was before me.*" He accorded to Jesus a position he would have warmly refused to Moses, the great lawgiver, or to Elijah, the most unearthly of the prophets. He would have denied such reverence to an archangel; for he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who had such vener-

ation for the divine character that it would have been to him a blasphemy to have obscured by an incautious expression the ineffaceable distinction between any creature, however lofty, and the eternal Creator. We may be sure that only the most overwhelming facts could have brought this stern monotheist to such a conclusion, or have induced him to project upon it his whole life and work. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ was not a dogma to which he was previously committed and to which he undertook to bend facts; it was a heaven-revealed fact to which all his Hebrew notions must be yielded and to which his whole career must be conformed.

And it must never be forgotten that by the same inductive process by which John was led to accept Jesus as divine has the Church formed the doctrine of the Trinity. Facts necessitated the doctrine; the doctrine did not produce the facts, but in it they are simply recognized and expressed. The apostles and early Christians were not a lot of philosophers, working out a system of thought, but they were a company of saved men who derived their teachings from facts of experience which could not be denied, and who made their doctrines conform to the

facts in the plainest and simplest manner possible. Philosophers have denied the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, but these great tenets were first proclaimed by God-sent preachers of salvation who did not hesitate to believe God, notwithstanding the mysteries of the redemption which he revealed in them and to them.

4. *The testimony of John to Jesus declared him to be a Saviour from sin as well as a divine Person.* “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” Says the great and good Spurgeon: “When our Lord was thus set forth by John, it is well to note the special character under which he was declared. John knew much of the Lord Jesus, and could have pictured him in many lights and characters. He might have especially pointed him out as the great moral Example, the Founder of a higher form of life, the great Teacher of holiness and love; yet this did not strike the Baptist as the head and front of our Lord’s character, but he proclaimed him as One who had come into the world to be the great Sacrifice for sin. Pointing to Jesus, he cried: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!’ He did not say: ‘Behold the

great Exemplar.' No doubt he would have said that in due season. He did not even say: 'Behold the King and Leader of the new dispensation.' That fact he would by no means have denied, but would have gloried in it. Still, the first point that he dwells upon, and that which wins his enthusiasm, is: 'Behold the Lamb of God.' John the Baptist views him as the Propitiation for sin, and so he cries: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'" Any theory about Christ which makes him anything less than a Saviour utterly fails to account adequately for the fact of the incarnation. Unless propitiation for sin is proposed in the incarnation, the incarnation is unnecessary; and if the Word has indeed become flesh and dwelt among us, nothing less than atoning sacrifice can explain why he has thus come among men. John saw Jesus not simply as a Lamb of innocence and gentleness, but as "the Lamb of God"—the Lamb appointed by God as the Sacrifice for sin and the Saviour from sin. He saw him not as a mere national Saviour or Deliverer, but as a Saviour of the whole world. Jesus is no mere social reformer or political renovator. He is preëminently the world's Saviour from sin, and in saving the

world from sin he saves it from every other real evil.

Men are willing to accept Christ as most anything except as Saviour; but Christ is not willing to be accepted as anything less than a Saviour. He is a Priest that he may offer sacrifice for a lost race; he is a Teacher that he may teach men the way of salvation; and he is a King in a kingdom of saved souls. If we will not accept him as the Lamb of God, we have no part with him. The Jews were ready to accept him as a political Reformer, but he refused such an office. Many nowadays are ready to accept him as the Leader of all sorts of social reforms, but they and all men must take him as their Saviour or not at all.

5. *John testifies that the salvation which Christ brings to men is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.* "The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." Says Canon Ryle, in his treatment of this passage: "The baptism by water is a most blessed and profitable ordinance, and cannot be neglected without great sin. But the baptism of the Holy Ghost is of far greater importance. The man who dies without his heart baptized by Christ can never be saved. Let us ask ourselves as we leave this

passage whether we are baptized with the Holy Ghost and whether we have any real interest in the Lamb of God.”

What we think of Christ is all-important; what we do with Christ and what he does for us are matters of still greater importance. Out of our personal relation to him are the issues of life. Is he our Saviour, or is he not? is the supreme question.

**III.**

**SEEKERS AFTER GOD.**



JOHN I. 35-51.

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42 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.

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

### III.

#### SEEKERS AFTER GOD.

THE testimony of John to Jesus is sublime and convincing; but the testing of that testimony by some of John's most devout followers, and their finding in the Master all that the Baptist claimed for him, adds force to it. That seeking of God which ends in the finding of God in Christ satisfies all the demands of reason and all the deepest wants of the soul. Wherefore Christ is crowned as the Son of God on earth by the acclamations of converted souls.

This passage, which records how some plain men sought and found Jesus as the Messiah, shows how all sincere seekers find him for whom their souls yearn.

1. *They were all seekers.* The question of the Master to the first two was: "What *seek* ye?" When Andrew went after his brother Simon, his first word was, "We have *found* the Messias"; and Philip said to Nathanael: "We have *found* him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." The words of Nathanael to Jesus

when they met, and the Lord's reply, show that the "Israelite indeed" had been *seeking God* in secret. Commenting on this passage, Chrysostom remarks: "The expression 'we have found' belongs always to those who are in some way seeking." The word of John the Baptist which induced the two disciples to follow Jesus was not an exhortation to them to go after him, but simply the repetition of the sublime words which fell unheeded upon the ears of the Pharisees the day before: "Behold the Lamb of God!" Canon Westcott aptly says: "The direction came not as a command, but in a form which tested their faith. The words spoken answered to their inmost thoughts, and so they could understand and obey them. But without this spiritual correspondence the decisive sentence could have no power of constraint, for it does not appear that John even addressed them, but rather he spoke indefinitely and the message came home to them." They sought Christ freely, of their own accord. The testimony of John to Christ set their hearts aflame with a burning desire to know and follow him for whom their souls had long yearned.

2. *They were seeking a Person, not new truths, not a Church, not a state of feeling, not*

*anything but the Messiah.* There were many in Israel who were longing for him, like Anna the prophetess and the devout Simeon. (Luke ii. 25-38.) Even such were these plain men of Galilee, who ran eagerly after Jesus as soon as he was pointed out to them as the Lamb of God. They felt that they must know him, for without him they would miss life's supreme joy and goal. The purpose of God in men is that "they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." (Acts xvii. 27.) The soul which finds not God fails of all good. Nor can any earthly good, even the noblest things, be substituted for God as the object of the soul's search. We are nowhere in the Scriptures exhorted to *seek religion* or the *revival of religion*, but we are everywhere in the divine Word urged to *seek God*. We find religion when we find him, and religion is revived in the soul when the heart's love for him is rekindled.

3. *And Jesus was seeking them as truly as they were seeking him.* When the first two followed him, he asked them, "What seek ye?" and when they answered that they sought only his dwelling place that they might be with

him, they were cordially invited: "Come and see." He found Philip without guidance or help from any man, and spoke to his deep meditations on the law and the prophets with the invitation, "Follow me." How deep was his insight into Simon's soul when he told him the new name he should bear, the symbol of the new nature he should find by becoming his follower! His omniscient eye found the praying Nathanael under the fig tree before Philip called him. A seeking soul can never be hid from Jesus. If a poor woman amid a multitude has a motion of faith toward him, he feels her touch, though it fall on the hem of his garment only. He went all the way on foot to Sychar to meet the soul yearnings of the Samaritan woman at the well, telling her in the saving interview that followed that "the Father was seeking worshipers" as truly as they were seeking him. (John iv. 23.) He summed up his whole mission in the simple but sublime declaration: "The Son of man is come *to seek* and *to save* that which was lost." (Luke xix. 10.)

Can a seeking Saviour and a seeking sinner, each looking for the other, fail to meet? "He that seeketh findeth." (Matt. vii. 8.) "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after

righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matt. v. 6.) In the matter of seeking God no earnest, sincere soul can fail. In all the history of mankind there is not a record of so much as one failure in such a quest.

4. *While they all sought the Messiah, and all found the same Lord, each came by a different way, peculiar to his own condition, relations, and surroundings.* John and Andrew came from hearing their great teacher, the Baptist, say publicly and privately: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!” Simon came at the bidding of his brother Andrew. Philip had been searching what “Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write” concerning the Messiah. Nathanael came on Philip’s invitation. But whether by one way or another, all came to Jesus.

Says Canon Ryle: “The fact before us is a deeply important one. It throws light on the history of all God’s people in every age and of every tongue. There are diversities of operations in the saving of souls. All true Christians are led by one Spirit, washed in one blood, serve one Lord, lean on one Saviour, believe one truth, and walk by one general rule. But all are not converted in one and the same

manner. . . . A careful recollection of this point may save us much trouble. We must beware of making the experience of other believers the measure of our own. We must beware of denying another's grace because he has not been led by the same way as ourselves. Has a man got the real grace of God? This is the only question that concerns us. . . . It matters nothing by what path a man has been led if he has only been led at last into the right way."

5. *All the relations of life may be and should be made the means of seeking and saving souls.* The relation of teacher and taught may be so used: Andrew and John came through the *teaching* of John the Baptist. Family relations may be so employed: Andrew brought his *own brother* Simon. The relations of *friendship and acquaintance* may become a channel of saving grace: Philip brought his friend Nathanael. Even the wide bonds of *nationality and human brotherhood* are designed to serve the ends of salvation; for St. Paul, at Athens, said: "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should

*seek* the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and *find* him.” (Acts xvii. 26, 27.)

6. *Men who would seek and save others must themselves have found the Lord.* The Baptist could point his followers to Christ, because by the Holy Ghost he had discerned him to be the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Andrew could influence Peter to come to Jesus, because he and John had been all night with the Master at his dwelling place, and had found him to be the “Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.” Philip, having been found by Jesus, and having discovered that his Finder was “He of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write,” was able to constrain Nathanael to come by the contagious call of his own experience in the simple words, “Come and see.”

7. *Neither the first experience of one who seeks the Lord and finds him nor any subsequent experience is final; there is always something “better further on.”* Nathanael, when he came to Christ, rapturously acknowledged him, crying out: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” “Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?



Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” It is noticeable that the promised revelations are not for Nathanael alone; the pronoun which the Master uses in the last verse is “ye,” not “thou.” And the ascending and descending angels he affirms will be seen upon the “Son of man.” The humanity of Jesus is wider in its office than the kingship of Israel, and he is one with human nature in a nearness not expressed by the term “Son of God,” which Nathanael had used in his confession of faith. “Profound and wide as the humanity of Christ, to the most forgotten and remotest outcast, to the most sunken and despairing of men, do love and care and helpfulness now come; high and glorious as the divinity of Christ may the hopes of all men now rise. He who understands the incarnation of the Son of God has a surer ground of faith and a richer hope and a straighter access to heaven than if the ladder of Jacob stood at his bed-head and God’s angels were ministering unto him.” (Marcus Dods.)

8. *One of the most convincing proofs that*

*“Jesus is the Son of God” is found in the fact that seekers after God find in him perfect satisfaction and rest for their souls.* It was mainly to prove that Jesus is the Son of God that St. John wrote the story of these first disciples who were won by Jesus (chapter xx. 31). It was as if he said: “These men sought him and tested him, and proved him to be the Son of God.” And the proof is conclusive. That newborn sons of God are constantly appearing in the earth, through faith in Jesus’s name, establishes as nothing else can that he is the Only-Begotten of the Father, “full of grace and truth.” Who else among men has ever been able to transform a fallen child of Adam into a risen son of God? Where else upon the earth is the miracle of regeneration being worked to-day except where Jesus is preached and believed?

How shall we account for the Church, the visible family of God, if Jesus is not the Son of God? The presence of one regenerated soul in the world would be conclusive proof that God was working among men; but what shall we say of that innumerable company that no man can number who claim that they have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb?

If we found such a body as the Christian Church in one land only, it would be a wonder. Or, if it appeared in one era only and then vanished out of sight, it would be a miracle. But what shall we say of such a company of men from all lands and all times? How shall we account for the purity and persistence of the Christian faith and the unearthly type of the Christian life? Christ is Head over all things to the Church, which is his body; and the existence of the Church would be impossible if he were not Head over all things. (Eph. i. 15-23.)

**IV.**

**CHRIST'S GLORY SEEN IN HIS TRANS-  
FORMING WORK.**

JOHN II. 1-11.

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

#### IV.

### CHRIST'S GLORY SEEN IN HIS TRANSFORMING WORK.

THE first record of the ministry of Elijah is his appearance before Ahab with his declaration that a dewless and rainless period would immediately follow in which all the land would become parched as a desert. (1 Kings xvii. 1-7.) The first miracle of his gentle successor, Elisha, was to heal the bad water of a city otherwise "pleasant" and restore the barren ground to fruitfulness. (2 Kings ii. 19-22.)

The first public appearance of John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah, is in the wilderness, clad in the plainest raiment and living on the hardest fare. (Matt. iii. 1-4.) The first miracle of Christ is wrought at a marriage, where he turns water into wine. A few weeks before, during his temptation in the wilderness, he maintained a miraculous fast; but now he made a miraculous feast. On a former occasion he had refused to make stones into bread to supply his own necessities; but on this occasion he turned water into wine for

the relief of others, thus performing a greater miracle than that wrought by Elisha when with a cruse of salt the gentle prophet healed the bad water of Bethel. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory" (verse 11).

Three days before this time his miraculous knowledge had conquered the prejudices and doubts of Nathanael, and on this occasion his putting forth miraculous power confirmed the faith of his early followers. "And his disciples believed on him" (verse 11). One of these disciples, John, records this miracle as a special "sign" of his glory, although he says that Jesus did "many other signs" which "are not written in this book." (John xx. 30.) The apostle chose it for record not only because it was Christ's first miracle, but also because its special significance gave to it an abiding value. It was in a sense an index of his Messianic character and a foreword of all his subsequent work among men. For this cause we may well dwell upon it that we may apprehend it as a manifestation of his divine glory.

1. *The culmination of Christ's work among men is to be in a bridal scene, and it was meet that his first miracle should be at a marriage.*

In the Revelation we read: "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared *as a bride adorned for her husband.*" (Rev. xxi. 2.) Marriage was the first institution ordained by God, and it is the symbol of "the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church." St. Paul teaches us that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." (Eph. v. 23.) Since Christ came into the world to win the Church to himself in the most vital and sacred of all unions, was it not most fitting that he should begin his public ministry with and work his first miracle at a marriage? Thus he sounded the keynote of his mission to our world.

And let it be said that, while Christ's relation to the Church is symbolized by a pure marriage, it does in turn shed light also upon the sanctity and significance of matrimony. The Church of Rome raises marriage to the level of a sacrament, and then with shocking inconsistency declares the marriage state to be too carnal for a priest or a nun. But a marriage is no more a sacrament than a burial, and "forbidding to marry" is a tenet of Antichrist and not according to the teaching of Christ. (1 Tim. iv. 3.) Mar-



riage is a very sacred thing, and to every marriage feast Jesus should be invited, as he was bidden to the marriage at Cana. His presence and blessing are required to make a truly happy wedding and a joyous wedded life. Christless marriages lead to godless homes—and often to lawless divorces. A marriage to which Christ and his disciples cannot be called without embarrassment cannot be expected to turn out well in the after years.

2. *In the doing of his work and the fulfillment of his mission Christ yields to no human authority, but moves only at his Father's bidding.* “And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come” (verses 3, 4). In his temptation in the wilderness he refused to turn stones into bread without his Father's command, and now he declined to act in advance of his Father's will in turning water into wine. The words to his mother, which, by reason of the impossibility of translation by us, sound so harsh to our ears, mean no more than: “Mother, in the ministry to which my Father has sent me, he only can direct me. My time has not yet come, because he has not yet signi-

fied to me any action with reference to the supply of wine." He was teaching her gently that "the Son can do nothing of himself" (John v. 19), and much more—that he cannot be subject to any human will.

The Romish notion of intercession by the Virgin Mary is shown by this incident to be utterly worthless. It proceeds upon the unscriptural assumption that Mary is more easily approached than the Saviour, and that the supplications of his children need to be filtered through her intercessions before they can be acceptable to him. It is recorded in the Gospels that he twice refused her requests: once when she came with his "brethren," desiring to see him with a view to taking him back home with them, because they probably thought him beside himself (Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21), and now at this marriage in Cana. On both occasions he gave her to understand that not her will but his Father's will must control his acts.

3. *Christ's work is a transformation and transfiguration of old things rather than the creation of new things.* He might have worked this miracle without any water at all quite as easily as he turned the water into wine, but in

that case the miracle would not have manifested the glory of his method in redeeming the world. Moreover, he did not *reform* the water by a process of filtration; he *transformed* it into a higher element. He changed its nature. Thus he transforms men and society. Without him "human nature is as weak as water"; but by his regenerating grace he transforms it to his own image and likeness "according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 21.) In the end he will renew all things by renewing individual souls. Wherefore he saith: "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. xxi. 5.)

4. *In his work of renewing all things he meets human nature in its extremity.* Jesus refused to act immediately upon his mother's suggestion, and waited until the supply of wine, which men had provided, had been completely exhausted. In like manner his advent into the world was delayed until men had exhausted all their resources of wisdom and strength in their efforts to attain happiness and holiness—and *all in vain*. When he came "in the fullness of time," Judaism and paganism both had run dry. Only when men are tired and utterly worn out with their own devices for salvation do

they heed the tender words of the only sufficient Saviour: "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest."

5. *Christ's work of transformation makes a glad world while making a new world.* His coming to the marriage feast in Cana rescued the occasion from embarrassment and mortification, and enriched it with gladness and exhilaration. He does not come among men to suppress their sensibilities, but to exalt their emotions. His religion does not drive men from social life, but blesses them in social life. He looks not upon innocent feasts and natural relations with austere eyes, but smiles upon them with sympathetic interest. He does not frown upon bridal festivities, but sets in the center of our sad world's hopes the bridal day of the Lamb. He desires for all his followers that this joy may remain in them, and that their joy may be full. (John xv. 11.)

6. *Christ uses men to help him in his work of transforming the world; and one who desires to participate in his work must do what he commands.* The waterpots were not filled by his hands; that was the part of the servants, to whom his mother said: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." At his command "they filled

them to *the brim*"—even as we should "*abound*" in the work of the Lord. At his bidding, without waiting a moment to ask an explanation, they drew out at once what they had just poured in. And he wrought the miracle while they thus obeyed his commands. No man can do Christ's work except in Christ's way.

7. *Christ's transforming work confirms the faith of his followers.* As a result of the miracle in Cana, John notes the fact that "*his disciples believed on him.*" They had believed enough before this time to follow him to Cana, but they were made stronger believers by what they saw him do there. And to-day the fruits of his grace among men strengthen the trust of his servants in him. Why should it not be so? "If the disciples believed on him when they saw him furnish these wedding guests with wine, shall we not believe who know that through all the ages he has furnished the pained and the poor with hope and consolation, the desolate and broken-hearted with restoring sympathy, the outcast with the knowledge of God's love, the sinner with pardon, with heaven, and with God?"

V.

COVETOUSNESS CROWDING GOD OUT,  
AND CHRIST DRIVING COVET-  
OUSNESS OUT.

JOHN II. 13-22.

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

## V.

### COVETOUSNESS CROWDING GOD OUT, AND CHRIST DRIVING COVET- OUSNESS OUT.

THE story of the conflict between Incarnate Love and human selfishness, found in the passage before us, furnishes an example for the study of covetousness as the root of all evil and the enemy of both God and goodness.

1. *The worst foe of the living God is covetousness.* The Master summed up all opposition to God in one word, "mammon," and declared: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." St. Paul declared the covetous man is an idolater, and that such a man hath no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v. 5.) Again, in the Epistle to the Colossians, he says: "Covetousness . . . is idolatry." (Col. iii. 5.) As if the sin of covetousness involved the setting at naught of all God's law, the Psalmist prayed: "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." (Ps. cxix. 36.) And these scriptures will not surprise us if we recall what deeds of evil have sprung from this ignoble passion. It was the sin of Achan



by which Israel met defeat at the outset of the conquest of Canaan, as it was also the sin of Ananias and Sapphira by which the infant Church was shamed and shocked at the outset of the conquest of the world for Christ. It was the spirit which, in the Pharisees, derided Christ (Luke xvi. 14) and which, in Judas, betrayed him. Well does Dr. Johnson call it "unfeeling and remorseless, the last corruption of degenerate man." St. Paul writes to Timothy: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi. 10.) Consider some of the evils to which it gives rise. (a) It intercepts faith in God. The covetous man seeks to be rid of dependence upon Providence, and by his gains to become a providence to himself. Such is the meaning of those solemn words of the Master: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than

meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matt. vi. 24, 25.) (b) It begets irreverence. It so magnifies low things and minifies high things that it confuses all moral values and leads to the worst profanity. Such was its outcome in the case of Hophni and Phinehas, and such was the case with the traders in the temple. (c) It is fruitful of subtle pretexts and ingenious deceits. It was by pretenses, doubtless, that the flagrant abuses which the Master rebuked on this occasion were brought to pass. Worshipers coming from points remote from Jerusalem found it convenient to buy animals for sacrifice on the spot at the temple. Other materials for the temple worship, such as salt, meal, oil, and frankincense, they would also wish to find near by. So under the guise of serving good ends the stalls of cattle dealers, sellers of doves, and other traders crept nearer and nearer to the sacred place until they came at last quite into it. So also, as every Jew was obliged to pay to the temple treasury an annual tax of half a shekel, and this tax could not be paid in any but the sacred currency, it being counted a profanity to pollute the treasury with a foreign coin, the tables of the money changers were brought in. What plausible defenses

could not covetous souls who profited by all these abuses make for them! They claimed, doubtless, that they were serving the cause of religion, and that their business in the outer court of the temple was scarcely less necessary than the work of the priests at the altar. Alas for the deceitfulness of greed! (*d*) It runs rapidly to the worst extremes. Twice the Master cleansed the temple—at the outset of his public ministry and near its close. In denouncing the traders he said on the first occasion: “Make not my Father’s house *a house of merchandise.*” But on the second occasion their evil merchandise had grown to robbery, and he said: “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it *a den of thieves.*” (Matt. xxi. 13.) “Cattle dealers and money changers have always been notorious for making more than their own out of their bargains, and facts enough are on record to justify our Lord in calling this particular market a den of thieves. The poor were shamefully cheated, and the worship of God was hindered and impoverished instead of being facilitated and enriched.” (Marcus Dods.) No doubt strangers from a distance were taken advantage of, and inferior animals at big prices were

forced on them for sacrifice. High charges for both offerings and money-changing were doubtless exacted from people too far from home to help themselves. (e) It is persistent. Jesus, on this first occasion of his visiting the temple after he had entered upon his public ministry, drove out the traders and the money changers; but they were back in their places two years later, grown harder in their purpose, more profane in their spirits, and more unscrupulous in their methods.

Such are some of the repulsive characteristics of covetousness. If any still doubt the enormity of this corrupt and corrupting sin, let them look around themselves to-day or, better, let them look *within* themselves. "Are there none who profess and call themselves Christians behaving every Sunday just as badly as these Jews? Are there none who secretly bring into God's house their money, their lands, their houses, their cattle, and a whole train of worldly affairs? Are there none who bring their bodies into the place of worship and allow their hearts to wander into the ends of the earth? Are there none who are almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation?" (Canon Ryle.)

2. *The living God will not endure covetousness in his house.* For this sin he drove out the traders and money changers, for this sin he slew Hophni and Phinehas, and for this sin he will punish the guilty to-day.

3. *Covetousness blinds the eyes of men so that they do not discern the Lord of the temple when he enters it.* Hence these Jews demanded of Jesus when he cleansed the temple: "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing thou doest these things?" What sign needed the Sun of Righteousness to show that he was the Sun? The difficulty was in their blindness.

4. *His answer to their stupid question shows what destroyed the temple, and how the true worship of God was restored by his resurrection.* The Jewish temple was the symbol of the Messiahship; and in rejecting Him of whom the temple was the type they destroyed it as a temple, and left it only a pile of stones without a God to glorify it with his presence. At this time he called it "*my Father's house*"; but when he went out of it the last time, just before he was crucified, he said: "*Your house is left unto you desolate.*" (Luke xiii. 35.) The opposition to him displayed on this occasion Jesus foresees will culminate in his crucifixion

and in the ultimate destruction of the temple and the overthrow of the religion of Israel as exhibited in the temple. But in his resurrection he will raise the temple up again. "It is in Christ's person," says Godet, "this great drama is enacted. The Messiah perishes; the temple rises on the ruins of the symbolic temple. For in the kingdom of God there is no simple restoration. Every revival is at the same time an advance." "Christ rose from the dead, not to startle Godless and truth-hating men into faith, but to furnish all mankind with a new and better temple—with the means of spiritual worship and constant fellowship with God. There was a necessity for the resurrection. Those who became intimately acquainted with Christ slowly but surely became aware that they found more of God in him than ever they had found in the temple. Gradually they acquired new thoughts about God; and instead of thinking of him as a Sovereign, veiled from the popular gaze in the hidden holy of holies and receiving through consecrated hands the gifts and offerings of the people, they learned to think of him as a Father to whom no condescension was too deep and no familiarity with men too close. Unconsciously to themselves, apparently, they

began to think of Christ as the true Revealer of God, as the living Temple who at all hours gave them access to the living God. But not till the resurrection was this transference complete. So fixed had their hearts been, in common with all Jewish hearts, upon the temple that not until the temple was destroyed did they wholly grasp what was given them in the resurrection of Jesus. It was the resurrection which confirmed their wavering belief in him as the Son of God. As Paul says, it was the resurrection which 'declared him to be the Son of God with power.'” (Marcus Dods.) The dying of Jesus was the destruction of the temple, the condemnation and passing away of the old order; the resurrection of Jesus was the raising of a new temple not made with hands, but filled with the life and glory of God. The perfection of worship in the upper kingdom will be through him; for when this same John, whose words we study to-day, got in Patmos a glimpse of the heavenly city, he said: “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the

nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. xxi. 22-27.)

Among the radiant and innumerable company which will fill at last the New Jerusalem, there will not be one touched with the taint of covetousness; for "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. xxi. 27.) Covetousness sets up rivals to Him in whom "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"; and when he hath put all enemies under his feet, he will put all the coveters and idolaters out of the New Jerusalem, the capital of his eternal kingdom, even as he drove them out of the temple of the Old Jerusalem.

Some vainly imagine that all men and any man will be admitted into the heavenly city;



but if Christ in fierce indignation drove the traders from the temple in the Old Jerusalem, can we believe he will be less zealous for the purity and sanctity of the New Jerusalem? Will he who cleansed the temple be less concerned for the holiness of heaven? To have left the traders in the ancient temple unbuked would have been to tolerate the defilement of the sources of the moral life of the Jewish nation. Mercy to them involved misery to all Israel. And to admit idolatrous coveters and all manner of sinners into the New Jerusalem would corrupt the moral life of the universe. The heavenly city has gates; and gates are made to *shut out* unfit things as well as to *shut in* the things which of right belong there.

**VI.**  
**LIFE AND LIGHT.**

JOHN III. 1-21.

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews :

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up :

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

## VI.

### LIFE AND LIGHT.

As we have seen in previous studies, the object of St. John's Gospel, as stated by himself, was that his readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (Chapter xx. 31.) The preceding chapters have been mainly concerned with incidents and events showing that Jesus is the Son of God, and now the evangelist gives us one showing how *life may be had in his name through faith*.

1. *We see in the case of Nicodemus that feeble and unsatisfactory faith in the beginning may come to strong and heroic faith in the end.* Nicodemus was one of those described in the close of the second chapter (which ought to be the beginning of the third), where it is said: "When he [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what

was in man.” The interview of Nicodemus with Jesus by night is recorded as an example of the untrustworthy faith which rests on nothing more than the sight of miracles. Faith sprung from merely seeing miracles is but half-belief, involving no moral act, but spending itself in nothing better than barren wonder. Such was the faith of Nicodemus, the Pharisee, when he came to Jesus by night, saying: “We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man *can do these miracles* that thou doest, except God be with him.” To him Jesus was not God, but only a prophet like John the Baptist, only “a man sent from God” and with whom God was present to help; not a Saviour, but a teacher. A half-belief so destitute of moral quality that it fell short of entering into any relations of personal trust—to such faith Jesus refused to commit himself, and he esteems it no more highly now. He trusts no farther than he is trusted.

But half-belief may be moving toward more belief, and each case of such belief must be treated according to the direction it is taking. A man who believes less to-day than he believed yesterday is traveling toward doubt and death; but he who believes more to-day than he believed

yesterday is advancing toward light and life. Of the latter sort was Nicodemus. He did not believe that Jesus was an impostor, as did most of the Pharisees. He believed that the Master was a Teacher come from God, to whom he should go for instruction in divine things, even though he lacked courage enough to seek his instruction in the open light of day, and dared not come to him except under the cover of darkness. The Lord met this imperfect, timid, but sincere faith with a discourse overflowing with heavenly truth and abounding in divine tenderness. "He knew what was in man;" and seeing the rising faith in the soul of the Pharisee, he did not "break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." And his treatment of Nicodemus was justified in the end. A little time after this interview we find the "man of the Pharisees" openly in the council of the Jews taking the Saviour's part, saying in defense of him: "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (John vii. 51.) At the crucifixion he came boldly, with Joseph of Arimathea, and begged the body of Jesus, and buried it with loving and reverent hands, after Peter had denied him, Judas had betrayed him,

and all the other apostles had forsaken him and fled. "It is not those who make the most flaming profession of religion at first who endure the longest and prove the most steadfast. Judas Iscariot was an apostle when Nicodemus was just groping his way slowly into the full light. Yet afterwards, when Nicodemus was boldly helping to bury his crucified Saviour, Judas Iscariot had betrayed him and hanged himself." (Canon Ryle.) The days of small things with faith should not be despised. The dawn of trust, though dimmed with doubt, may rise to the perfect day.

2. *The religion of the Pharisee is not enough, although it be touched with the half-belief of a Unitarian which sees in Jesus only a teacher come from God.* Nicodemus came seeking light only, but Jesus gave him to understand that his real supreme need was life. "Jesus answered and said unto him, . . . Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (verse 3). Similarly he declared in the Sermon on the Mount: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 20.)

3. *Jesus emphasizes the necessity of the new*

*birth with the solemn words, "Verily, verily," showing how imperative is its necessity. He teaches that it is absolutely and inflexibly indispensable. (a) Because the natural man must become the spiritual man to be saved. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (verse 6). So also St. Paul teaches, in harmony with the Master's words: "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 6, 7.) (b) Because the unregenerate man cannot even perceive the true nature of the kingdom of God. "He cannot see the kingdom of God." To the same purpose the apostle Paul speaks in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit. . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 14.) (c) The man who has not been born*



again cannot be a citizen of the kingdom of heaven—"cannot enter the kingdom of heaven" (verse 5)—for he cannot keep the laws of the kingdom. To obey the Sermon on the Mount one must first know by faith the Preacher and Saviour who proclaimed it as the constitution of the heavenly kingdom. A nobler Pharisee than Nicodemus said: "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And he found relief for his heart-breaking difficulty in the salvation of Christ, answering his own bitter inquiry of wretchedness with the glad words: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vii. 19, 24, 25.)

4. *The necessity for the new birth cannot be met by any natural heredity or ecclesiastical ancestry.* The idea of a new birth was not new to a Pharisee. The term was commonly applied by the Jews to the process of proselyting through which a Gentile was required to pass to become a citizen of the commonwealth of Israel. Nicodemus seems to have supposed that as a descendant of Abraham and a "ruler of the Jews" he was already a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, and that to call him to the

“new birth of a proselyte of the Gentiles” was as absurd as would be the demand that a man enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born over, when he was old (verse 4). This was the common notion of the Jews then. (John viii. 33.) But Jesus was inflexible in declaring the inadequacy of this view, as was John the Baptist, who by his demand that the people be baptized had, in effect, excommunicated the whole nation, and who in vindication of his demand had said: “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” (Matt. iii. 9.)

5. *The nature of the new birth is that of an unearthly life imparted by the Holy Spirit.* To possess such life one must be “born from above” (verse 3), “born of the Spirit” (verse 5). It is not a life re-formed out of the old elements, but a life transformed by a vital force imparted to the soul; so that “if any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Cor. v. 17.)

6. *The source of the new life, imparted in regeneration, is in the incomprehensible nature*

*of the living Spirit who is the Agent by whom it is given; but its unearthly source is not more mysterious than the origin of life in all its forms, nor more inscrutable than the common processes of nature. It is above reason, but not contrary to reason.* “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (Verse 8.) The *how* of these things a master in Israel may not understand, but *the fact* of them is not thereby disproved or discredited; for of them the Son of God hath said: “We speak that we know, and testify that we have seen.” (Verse 11.) The facts of the new life are attested by him; and they are verifiable by every human soul who sincerely seeks this life through him.

7. *The condition upon which the supernatural life is granted to men is that of faith in the crucified and risen Son of God.* “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (Verses 14, 15.) It is not belief of a creed, but faith in a Person. It is not faith in one’s feelings any more than an

Israelite in the wilderness could have been healed of a serpent's bite by watching the granulating of his own wound rather than by looking to the brazen serpent. Not by *looking within*, but by *looking above*, are men saved. It is not even faith in faith which saves, or faith in prayer; but faith in the Saviour revealed to our faith, and faith in the God who answers prayer.

8. *The origin of this salvation by which men are granted new life through faith is in love of God for all men.* It is life from love, and life to love, and life in loving. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This life is both the gift of divine love and the birth of true human love. To live truly is to love divinely.

9. *This salvation, by which men may be born again, tests their old life as well as gives them new life.* If a man really loves truth and light, and sincerely wishes to know God, he will accept it; otherwise he will reject it. It condemns, therefore, them who reject it, although it was sent not to condemn men, but to save them. "He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned

already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (Verses 18, 19.) Men are lost, since Jesus has come, not for lack of light, but by rejection of light. Did Nicodemus, who feared to come except by night, wince when Jesus spoke these searching words about loving darkness rather than light? Shall not those who still reject him wince also under them? If one will not accept Christ, it is because he does not love the good; he hates light who rejects the Lord of light (verse 20). "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) Such a loveless soul is accursed. He who cannot or will not love *Him* cannot love any one. The springs of life are dried up utterly and hopelessly in such a soul.

VII.

**“HE THAT WINNETH SOULS.”**

JOHN IV. 1-42.

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

3 He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews, etc.

## VII.

### “HE THAT WINNETH SOULS.”

PURSUING his plan to record facts so as to beget in his readers the life-giving belief that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” St. John in the preceding chapters has shown us John the Baptist and the first disciples thus accepting and believing on Christ in Galilee; some of the people of Jerusalem and Judea believing on him; the manifestation of his glory by his first miracle at Cana and the increased faith of his disciples; and his assertion of his divine Sonship by the cleansing of the temple. In the passage before us we are shown the Saviour himself bringing an outcast woman of Samaria to saving faith in him, and, through her, reaching with the same truth many people in a Samaritan village. In the incident at Jacob’s well, with the results that followed it, we see the Master as a soul winner, illustrating the proverb of his royal ancestor who said: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” (Prov. xi. 30.)

1. *Winning souls is not by ritualistic enlistment of the followers of a party.* Jesus left



Judea when his miracle began to attract to him men of half-belief and when the Pharisees began the effort of fomenting strife between his followers and those of John the Baptist. He would not proclaim himself the Messiah to minds so ill conceiving the object of his mission and the nature of his kingdom. Mere baptism was a subordinate work which he left to his disciples. "Himself baptized not, but his disciples." To the same purpose St. Paul afterwards spoke: "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. i. 17.) Baptism, although a divinely appointed ordinance, is not of the essence of Christianity. One may be baptized without being saved; and one may be saved without being baptized, if he does not willfully and contemptuously neglect the ordinance of God.

2. *A soul winner, being led of God, goes where there is most need of him.* "Jesus must needs go through Samaria," not alone because Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee; for the Galileans did not generally go through Samaria in going to and coming from the feasts at Jerusalem; it was a province so despised that most of them always went round it. Jesus was constrained, not by geography alone, but by the

compassion of his own all-loving heart, and by the needs of the poor soul to relieve whose wants he was providentially led through Samaria at "the nick of time."

3. *The heart of a soul winner is so filled with his work that he allows no surmountable obstacle to interfere with that work.* "Jesus was wearied with his journey," but he was not too tired to try to save an outcast woman. Jewish prejudices forbade any dealings with the Samaritans, and the rabbins were accustomed to say: "Talking with a woman is one of the six things which make a disciple impure." But the Master gave not heed to unreasonable and wicked prejudices which stood between him and the salvation of a soul. The disciples "marveled that he talked with the woman," and she was herself not less surprised; but knowing as we now know our Lord, we would be surprised if he had done otherwise. He tells us in the words he addressed to the disciples, who were with him, why no weariness of body or constraint of custom could arrest the energies of his saving grace: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verse 34). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the hands also toil. A heart

constrained by love cannot be constrained by conventionalities when the salvation of a soul is involved and the work of God is to be done.

4. *Providence brings coincidences to aid a soul winner who is bent on doing the work of God.* It was no accident that the Saviour and the Samaritan woman reached the well at the same hour—twelve o'clock, noon. Had either been a half hour earlier or later, the meeting would not have occurred. Providential events have a spiritual purpose, and there are no accidents in their ordering. God "orders the steps" of soul winners, helping them to find, at the most impressible moments, the wayward who long to return to their Father's house.

5. *A soul winner, whose meat and drink is to do the will of him by whom he is sent, with an inspired tactfulness turns the smallest incidents to account in the effort to save the lost.* "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." To ask a favor brings one closer to another than to accept a favor, especially if the party of whom the favor is asked be the inferior. The woman was surprised and pleased that a Jewish rabbi, as she took Jesus to be, should ask even a drink of water at her hands, an outcast woman of Samaria. So also Jesus drew near to the

publicans and sinners when he went *to be their guest*. (Matt. ix. 11.) By becoming the guest of Zaccheus he became also his Saviour. (Luke xix. 10.) If we would reach people, we must go in reach; and we reach most easily and quickly the level of a man whom we would save when we are ready to put ourselves under obligation to him. Moreover, if our hearts are set on doing good, giving and receiving so small a thing as a drink of water will be turned to account and bent to spiritual uses. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.)

6. *A soul winner seeks first of all to bring to the sinner a conviction of sin.* By an easy turn in the conversation Jesus brought the woman face to face with the dominant evil of her life. "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband," etc. Says Canon Ryle: "Those heart-searching words appear to have pierced her conscience like an arrow. From that moment, however ignorant, she speaks like an earnest, sincere inquirer after truth. And the reason is evident. She felt that her spiritual disease was discovered. For the first time in her life she saw herself. To bring people to this state

of mind should be the principal aim of all teachers and ministers of the gospel.

7. *A soul winner must insist upon the spirituality of God as against all questions of form and ceremony in dealing with lost souls. A spiritual God calls for spiritual worshipers. Spiritual worship by its very nature must be sincere worship. When we deal with the God who seeth in secret we are forced to approach him in spirit and in truth; "in the secret place of the Most High" there is no room for the ignorant worship of Samaritans, worshiping they know not what, nor for the superstitious worship of Jews, absorbed in heartless ceremonies and vain ablutions. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." And if the Father hath gone forth seeking worshipers, he will allow no limitations of place, whether in Judea or Samaria, to separate between him and a truly worshipful soul. Spiritual worship can no more be a matter of mere place than the true God can be a local Deity. The proclaiming of the nature of God is the means of leading souls to him and securing them against false worship when they*

seek to approach unto him. If souls are preserved, they must be brought to deal with God directly and made to feel that alienation from him is the worst of all ills. Modern preachers and teachers are in danger of talking too little of God and too much of man, too little of heaven and too much of earth. In the pipings of many modern reformers we detect too many tones of the *vox humana* and too little of the *vox Dei*.

8. *The soul winner stops not short of revealing Christ as the Saviour of the soul.* To this simple and open-minded woman Jesus declared himself as he did not declare himself to the priests and Levites in the temple at Jerusalem. When she spoke of the hope of the Messiah which she entertained, he said unto her: "I that speak unto thee am he." And ignorant and outcast as she was, she grasped eagerly and savingly the transcendent truth. In most unsuspected places, amid the most unpromising surroundings, we may find souls ready to receive the Saviour.

9. *A warm-hearted soul winner sees ripening harvests where less zealous spirits see nothing of present or prospective good; and the visions of the soul winner are fulfilled in the reaping.*

“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” So spake Jesus to the disciples as the eager men of the village, led by the woman, “went out of the city, and came unto him.” (Verses 30 and 35.) Not till after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord did Philip and the rest discover how ripe was the Samaritan harvest. The Samaritan Pentecost, recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts, had its beginnings, doubtless, in this visit of Jesus to Sychar.

10. *The wages of soul winners are sure, and they are paid in the coinage of eternal life.* “He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.” The best reward which a laborer in the vineyard of the Lord ever obtains is that which he finds in the redeemed souls whom he gathers to eternal life. The souls at Philippi whom Paul won for Christ he called his “joy and crown.” (Phil. iv. 1.) “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever.” (Dan. xii. 3.) “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from

death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”  
(Jas. v. 20.)

11. *Soul winners are in a great succession, and the stream of spiritual life pours through them from generation to generation.* “And herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.” Mark the words “ye are entered into *their labors*,” not into any sort of rest. Because good men have labored before us we must work to save the fruit of their labors; “without us” neither they nor their work can be “made perfect.” (Heb. xi. 40.) Imperfect and unknown laborers had prepared the Samaritan harvest to be gathered by the Lord and the apostles.

12. *The winning of one soul, though it be a humble and blighted one, may bring many others to God and solve many hard problems.* “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.” What domestic wounds in Sychar were healed by her conversion! The cleansing of the “red light” districts of our cities would cure troubles in respectable and fashionable sections.



13. *The winning of souls supplies ever-fresh proof that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God."* St. John gave this story as proof of this lofty truth, and the argument from such facts is sound and conclusive. The conversion of a soul is the most convincing apologetic, and a revival of religion like that in Sychar of Samaria, is one of the noblest evidences of Christianity. And this sort of proof accumulates with every fleeting day and passing century. Jesus daily shows himself to be the Son of God as he lifts others into the heavenly experience of sonship to the Father. There is no refuting the argument for his divinity drawn from the cases of "twice-born men" whom he has redeemed from degeneration and shame to virtue and honor.

VIII.

JESUS ANSWERING PRAYER AND PER-  
FECTING FAITH.

6

JOHN IV. 43-54.

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth,

52 Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

## VIII.

### JESUS ANSWERING PRAYER AND PERFECTING FAITH.

IN our last study we saw the Samaritans accepting Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God," although he worked no miracles to convince them. He tarried with them through two eventful days, during which many believed on him. His miracles at Jerusalem were not known to the Samaritans, for none except himself and his disciples had passed through Samaria after the feast. He came to them without human indorsement or visible marks of his divine character; but they accepted him for the high truth he declared and for the heavenly nature he manifested to them. The glory of his personality had won them, and they asked for no marvels to prove his divinity or establish his authority. So happy a harvest in a place from which so little might have been expected was enough to have inclined the Master to tarry long with them; but impelled by higher motives than those which arise from easy labor or friendly treatment, our Lord passed on to

Galilee, where less honor, less faith, and less favorable conditions awaited him.

1. *Observe the self-denying ministry of our Lord.* “After two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee; for Jesus himself testified that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.” Says Quesnel: “It is an instance of self-denial which is very uncommon to leave those who respect and applaud us that we may go to preach among others from whom we have reason to expect a quite different treatment.” The true servant of God goes not where men want him, but where God needs him.

2. *An example of imperfect and unsatisfactory faith.* “When he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast” (verse 45). But Jesus never trusted himself to such faith as that which springs only from the seeing of miracles done. It contains no moral quality which one can depend upon. At best it deifies his deeds, but fails to adore his person; it makes more of what he does than of what he is; it wonders rather than worships. It cares more for what it *derives from him* than for what it *discerns in him*. “A faith which is

merely selfish, which recognizes that Christ can save from disaster in this life or in the life to come, and which cleaves to him solely on that account, is scarcely the faith that Christ approves. There is a faith which responds to the glory of Christ's personality, which rests on what he is, which builds itself on the truth he utters, and recognizes that all spiritual life centers in him; it is this faith that he approves. Those who find in him the link they have sought with the spiritual world, the pledge they have needed to certify them of an eternal righteousness, those to whom the supernatural is revealed more patently in himself than in his miracles, are those whom the Lord delights in." (Marcus Dods.)

3. *A faith that is imperfect and unsatisfactory in its beginnings may grow until it comes to perfect trust.* Jesus went to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine, and where Nathanael lived, and where possibly he himself had kindred. The miracle he had wrought there and the conversion of Nathanael had doubtless in the meantime become known far and wide. Popular interest in him had been quickened also by the news of what he did at Jerusalem in the cleansing of the tem-

ple—news which quickly ran through all Galilee as the visitors to the feast returned to their homes. A ruler, or courtier—*i. e.*, a civil officer—at Capernaum heard that he “had come out of Judea into Galilee,” and “besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.” This ruler had not the faith of the Roman centurion who, when the Lord proposed to go and heal his servant, said: “I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” (Matt. viii. 5-13.) He was of those who believed only when they saw signs and wonders (verse 48); but he had some faith. He had faith enough to come to Christ, which was not an easy thing for one in his position to do; and, although when he came at first he believed only in Christ’s power to heal when present by the sick, he was at last ready to trust the Saviour’s bare word for the healing. When he was told, “Go thy way; thy son liveth,” he obediently went his way at the bidding of the Lord. Step by step as he went his faith increased; and when, at the end of his journey, he saw the healing done by Jesus, at a distance of twenty miles, by the speaking of

a mere word, his trust was complete—*“himself believed, and his whole house.”* How kind and compassionate was Jesus to this man who came to him with such imperfect faith! And his divine kindness fanned the smoking flax into a flame. Our Lord is well characterized as “the God of patience and consolation.” (Rom. xv. 5.)

4. *Providence coöperates with Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, in producing and perfecting faith.* The sickness of the son led the nobleman to ignore the prejudices which were current at the court and present in his own heart, and to set aside every other hindrance, and go to Jesus in the hour of distress. If the nobleman’s son had never been ill, his father might have lived and died in his sins. How often has the sickness and death of little children broken down the obstinate resistance of hard hearts and subdued the stoutest rebels before God! It was the great dramatist, Shakespeare, who said:

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.”

And it was a greater than Shakespeare who sang centuries before the “Bard of Avon”



lived: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. . . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." (Ps. cxix. 67-71.) Saintliness promoted by suffering is worth all the pain it costs.

5. *For the development of faith in human souls our Lord takes account of each soul's peculiar condition and needs.* He was ready to go with the centurion and heal his servant, but he refused to go with the nobleman to heal his son. Chrysostom thus discusses the difference of treatment by the Lord of the two cases: "What can be the reason why in the case of the centurion Christ undertook voluntarily to come and heal, where here, though invited, he came not? Because in the case of the centurion faith had been perfected, and therefore he undertook to go that we might learn the right-mindedness of the man; but here the nobleman's faith was imperfect. When, therefore, he continually urged him, saying, 'Come down,' and knew not clearly that even when absent he could heal, he showeth that even this was possible unto him in order that this man might gain from his not going that knowledge which the centurion had of himself." The dealings of

God with each human soul are minutely adapted to the characteristics and necessities of such soul, to the end that faith may be confirmed and love perfected. The refusals of God to give us what we ask are made in order that he may give us better things than we ask.

6. *Our Lord is greater than our faith to the end that our faith may ever grow greater and greater.* The nobleman could not at first believe him more than a prophet who could work miracles when a case was present before him; but in the end he found him to be even at a distance a divine Saviour—"a very present help in time of need"—even though far away in person. Very false is that teaching, and very dishonoring to the abounding grace of our Lord, which tells men that he never does for a man any more than the man knows he needs and asks for. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." (Eph. iii 20, 21.)

7. *Christ's word is as sure a ground for faith as his bodily presence.* So the nobleman found, and so all trustful souls in all ages and climes

have found. Those who saw him in the flesh had no advantage over us who love him, though we have not seen him. His ear is open to our cry and his power is as effective for our help as if he walked again visibly on the earth and came to the places where we live as he came to Cana and Capernaum. The fact of his humanity was a difficulty which they had to surmount; but to us it is given to see the greatness and glory of the power shown forth by what he has accomplished in many lands on the earth since he ascended into heaven and vanished out of human sight. He has shown himself "mighty to save"; and this mighty One is not far from any who "call upon him in truth."

**IX.**

**JESUS GOING ABOUT DOING GOOD.**

JOHN v. 1-16.

1 After thjs there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 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?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

## IX.

### JESUS GOING ABOUT DOING GOOD.

At the previous feast in Jerusalem Jesus had shown himself as the Lord of the temple, the sacred place of worship, and now at another feast in the holy city, at the pool of Bethesda, he shows that he is Lord of the Sabbath, the sacred day of worship. The ecclesiastical selfishness of the Jewish rulers had profaned the sacred place by making it over-secular, and damaged the sacred day by making it over-sacred. By an act of holy and consuming zeal the Master asserted the rights of God against profane secularity, and by an act of heavenly mercy he vindicated the rights of man against a superstitious sanctity. In both instances he showed glory to God in the highest, and good will unto men. He made clear that he was the Son of God as he "went about doing good."

1. *Jesus went about doing good in the prosecution of the ordinary duties and observances of religion.* With the utmost scrupulousness he observed the religious days and services of Israel, and found occasions for his deeds of mercy

in the daily routine of a devout life. Our lesson is a case in point, the record being: "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." The Jewish feasts were of his Father's appointing, and as long as they lasted he honored them. The priests might be, and in many cases were, very unworthy persons; but this did not prevent our Lord's honoring the temple, with its feasts and ordinances; and in honoring them he found opportunity for doing all manner of good. True sons of God thus always find and do their work. They do not need to seek their duty by theatric searches for it, but they meet it along the way of holy living.

2. *When Jesus was on earth, going about doing good, he showed mercy to the most friendless and helpless, whom the selfishness of their fellows most neglected and oppressed.* For the long space of thirty-eight years this poor man had suffered; and when he came to the place of healing, he could find no friend to put him in the pool; but other sufferers, grown selfish by their suffering, rushed in before him and prevented his cure. What a foil was such heartlessness for exhibiting in strong colors the gracious compassion of the Master! What a con-

trast between man's inhumanity to man and the tender love of Jesus for the most forlorn of the sons of Adam!

3. *The mercy of Jesus, which sent him about doing good, was not like the earthly springs of relief for human ills, so stinted that only one in many could avail himself of it, but inexhaustible, so that the most hopeless children of grief found help in him.* Bethesda's pool spent its force when one sufferer stepped into its troubled waters; but his power and compassion never ran dry. Human selfishness might hinder a poor paralytic by going lovelessly in advance of him into the healing flood; but Jesus, with penetrating and pitying eye, picked him out from all the multitude in Bethesda's porches to do him good.

4. *When Jesus was going about doing good, though his mercy was boundless and his power infinite, he could help them only who would help themselves by faith.* The first word he put to the impotent man was one to arouse his will, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and the second was a command: "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Christ imparted no power to walk until the man's will responded in hearty consent to the command, and the effort to walk was



put forth. Similarly, he said to the man in the synagogue with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand"; and when he stretched it forth, his hand was restored in the act. (Mark iii. 5.) Religious health, even as these bodily healings, is not found in listless and languid hearing of gospel truth, but in resolute laying hold of Christ's offered grace. "Life, true life, such as Christ calls us to, with its obligations to others, its honest and spontaneous devotion to spiritual ends, its risks, its reality, and purity, does not seem attractive to the spiritual valetudinarian. In fact, nothing so thoroughly reveals a man to himself, nothing so clearly discloses to him his real aims and likings, as the answer he finds he can give to the simple question: 'Are you willing to be made whole?' Are you willing to be fitted for the highest and purest life?" (Marcus Dods.)

5. *When Jesus was going about doing good, the worst foe he met was ecclesiastical selfishness and envy.* This evil spirit made the rulers of the Jews see in his act of divine mercy on this occasion a sacrilege, in the Sabbath of rest a yoke of bondage, and in the prophetic scriptures a misleading light. (John v. 39.) No wonder in the end such blindness led them to

crucify with wicked hands the Only-Begotten of the Father, vainly imagining that they were saving the cause of true religion by slaying the Prince of Life. And the Master explained it all when he said to them: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God?" (John v. 44.) It was these honor-loving ecclesiastics who objected to the healed man's carrying his bed through the streets at the command of Jesus, although in the morning of the same day, doubtless, hundreds of patients had been carried through the streets on their beds to the pool where Jesus found him in his helplessness. Going on a bed sick to Bethesda was lawful, but coming away healed, bearing a bed, was sin! They were more concerned to dishonor the Lord than they were to honor the Sabbath, because they were bent on making a reputation for piety without the trouble of being pious. It is thus men grieve God to glorify themselves. They were engaged in manufacturing religion for the market, and they, therefore, resisted any holy one who discredited their trade-mark by exposing the shoddiness of their wares.

6. *When Jesus was going about doing good, the heavenly quality of his acts, their perfect*

*lawfulness, was guaranteed by the divine mercy from which they sprang and the divine power by which they were done.* The healed man made ample and conclusive answer to the quibble of the Jewish leaders when he said: "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." "He that gave me strength told me how to use it. Intuitively the man lays down the great principle of Christian obedience. If Christ is the source of life to me, he must also be the source of law. If without him I am helpless and useless, it stands to reason that I must consider his will in the use of the life he communicates." (Marcus Dods.)

7. *When Jesus was going about doing good among men, he was simply drawing from the heavenly springs of mercy in the divine heart of his Father and our Father.* "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." No more could his deeds be an infraction of the Sabbath law than the ongoings of that Providence by which the days and nights go on, the sun shines, and the rain falls, could be profane. "Our Lord's reply to the Jews is very remarkable. It is as though he said: 'Though my Father rested on the seventh day from his work of creation,

he has never rested a moment from his providential government of the world and from his merciful work of supplying the daily wants of all his creatures. Were he to rest from such work, the whole frame of nature would stand still. And I also work works of mercy on the Sabbath day. I do not break the fourth commandment when I heal the sick any more than my Father breaks it when he causes the sun to rise and the grass to grow on the Sabbath.’”  
(Canon Ryle.)

In all this, however, it must not be supposed for a moment that Jesus was teaching any lax view of the fourth commandment. That commandment is of perpetual obligation, resting on the needs of man and the honor of God; and the Master in what he said on this occasion was simply placing it upon its true and abiding foundation. “The Sabbath was made for man”—not for the Jews alone and only while the Mosaic system stood, *but for universal man*. Therefore it is to be perpetual in its duration and world-wide in its obligation.

8. *When Jesus was among men doing good, his deeds and his words set up the claim for him that he was the Son of God and equal with God.* For this he was crucified. “Therefore the

Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." They understood him more correctly than do the Unitarians, and he did not seek to escape their persecution by denying that they understood him as he intended them to understand him. Would Jesus have allowed himself to be crucified for a misconception of his claims or a misunderstanding of his words? Nay, verily; his words were but the commentary on his works, and his works of power and love showed him to be divine.

"Let all the world fall down, and know  
That none but God such love can show."

9. *When Jesus was going about doing good to men, there was one thing he could not do, with all his power and love: he could not restore the irreparable past.* The man was healed, and told to go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto him; but thirty-eight precious years had been lost because of some youthful sin. The Master himself could not bring them back. Jesus can seek and save a lost soul, but there is no power in heaven above or in the earth beneath that can restore a lost day! God himself cannot change history!

X.

CHRIST ASSERTING HIS SONSHIP.

JOHN v. 17-47.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 I receive not honour from men.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive, etc.

## X.

### CHRIST ASSERTING HIS SONSHIP.

THE revelation of God in Christ is too positive and powerful to leave men as it finds them; whom it does not draw to life it drives to death. The healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda by Christ led him to accept his healer as the Son of God, but it moved the Jews to more bitter hostility to him.

But their opposition to him has been turned to the advantage of the faithful in all subsequent ages; the contradiction of him by these sinners elicited from him a reply which must remain a consolation to his true Israel as long as time endures. On this occasion for the first time Jesus sets forth publicly his lofty claim that he is the Son of God, and in so doing utters the most important truth ever revealed to mankind. It outranks the confession made later by Peter at Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi. 13-18); that was what a man said in reply to the Lord's question, "Whom say ye that I am?" But this is what Jesus himself claims to be. And we may surely believe that he knew the



nature of his own being and did not speak falsely about what he knew. He said he was the Son of God. Who will dare deny what he said?

1. *The divine Sonship of Jesus is revealed in deeds springing from the energies of his ever-active Father.* This is the meaning of the words in which he defends himself against the accusation of profaning the Sabbath day: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." On this occasion he did not expound the Sabbath law to show that it allowed works of mercy and necessity, as he did on some other occasions (Matt. xii. 10-12; Mark ii. 23, 24; iii. 2-4); but he justified his act by the far higher consideration that it was the outgoing of divine power, and that it was as sinless as the unceasing acts of the divine Providence and as holy as the unwearied ministries of the divine mercy. He asserted that his work was upon the same level with his Father's work, or, rather, that he and the Father were doing one and the same work. So he intended to be understood, and so his enemies did actually understand him. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making him-

self equal with God.” He did not so much as hint that in understanding him thus they had mistaken his true meaning; but he proceeded at once to expound his claim of equality with the Father and to enlarge his divine demands upon them.

2. *The relation of the Son to the Father is that of unqualified unity and unclouded communion.* So perfect was his filiation that he could neither mistake nor ignore his Father’s will: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” On the side of the Father also there is fellowship with the Son equally unlimited: “For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.” Such language utterly excludes the petty quibbling which acknowledges the “divinity” of Jesus, but denies his “deity.” Such quibbling is jesuitical deceit.

3. *The Son shares and mediates the life-giving power of the Father.* “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (verse 21). “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath

he given the Son to have life in himself" (verse 26). Wherefore the Son is the author of spiritual life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." These words refer evidently to the spiritual life which is imparted to the dead souls of men when they hear and heed the words of Jesus. He is the Giver of life to them who love life and who seek it through him. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made *a quickening spirit.*" (1 Cor. xv. 45.) Wherefore St. Peter most justly and worshipfully called him the Prince of Life (Acts iii. 15), and thus asserted his life-giving power in the healing of the impotent man at the "beautiful gate" of the temple, as Christ claimed the operation of the same power in the cure of this impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. Peter was careful *to disclaim* the power for himself and John: "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

(Acts iii. 12.) But Jesus was careful *to claim* it for himself. If, therefore, Jesus was no more than a man, he was not as humble and good a man as Peter.

4. *As the Giver of life the Son is also the Power of the resurrection.* “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” In the light of this claim to superhuman power, Jesus said on another occasion: “I am the resurrection, and the life.” (John xi. 25.)

5. *Because the Son is the Source of life to men, he is the Judge of the lives of men.* “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. . . . And hath given authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (verses 22, 27). By his revelation of God and his offer of life, Christ tests men, and sifts and separates them into the two great classes of saved and unsaved, believers and unbelievers. He necessarily and inevitably judges men by being what he is. Men either accept the life which he offers and enter the kingdom of heaven, or they reject it and

abide in death. Wherefore he saith: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." (John iii. 18.) And again he tells us that the Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, "because they believe not on me." (John xvi. 9.) The judgment which he thus executes is as unerring as the acid test which reveals pure gold and detects base metals; it is as unfailing as the justice of God, for it is the judgment of the Father. "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (verse 30). The superhuman holiness of Jesus marks him out among the sons of men as the Son of God and makes him the Judge of all men.

6. *To the Sonship of Jesus there are incorruptible and heavenly witnesses.* (a) That most remarkable man, John the Baptist, testified to him; and his whole career is utterly aimless and meaningless if Jesus was not and is not the Son of God (verses 33-36). The Baptist's preaching in the wilderness was based on a false belief, created false hopes, called men

to a spurious and vain repentance, and ended in disappointment, if the Messiah has not come. Israel's greatest prophet was a false prophet, if Jesus is not the Christ. (b) The works of Christ attest his Sonship. In both the matter of the superhuman power which they revealed and the divine character which they disclosed they showed their author to be the Son of God (verse 36). (c) The Father himself vindicated Christ's claim of Sonship. At his baptism "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 16, 17.) This attesting and approving voice spoke again on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5; Mark ix. 7; Luke ix. 35), and again at the last Passover, just before his crucifixion (John xii. 28). (d) The Scriptures certify his Sonship (verses 39, 45-47). In like manner said Peter: "*To him give all the prophets witness.*" (Acts x. 43.) Men do not reject Jesus for lack of light, but from perverseness of life.

7. *In the willful rejection of the life offered by Jesus is found the explanation of why some men deny his Sonship.* "Ye will not come to me,

that ye might have life” (verse 40). They refused to honor him as the Son, because they loved not his Father: “I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you” (verse 42).

8. *Men who reject Christ are prone to accept false gods and guides.* “I come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (verse 43). And they did go after false messiahs. No less than sixty-four false messiahs found followers among the Jews at one time and another during this period of their history. Their carnal minds corrupted the Messianic hope that was revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, so that the light which was given them to lead them to God led them away to impostors. It is always so; when Christ is rejected by men, superstition reigns over them. Saul went to the witch of Endor when he had apostatized from the God of Israel. St. Paul wisely warns us against the fate of them who “turn their ears from the truth, *and are turned unto fables.*” (2 Tim. iv. 4.)

9. *Loss of loyalty to God the Father in worldly subjection to human authority leads men to reject Christ as the Son of God.* “How can ye believe, which receive honor, one of another,

and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" Many would be Christians if they feared not their fellow men; they wish to accept Christ, and are convinced of the justice of his divine claims upon them, but they feel that they cannot afford to break with the world to follow him. Such were some of the leaders of the Jews at this time: "Among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: *for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*" (John xii. 42, 43.) A corrupted religion, which has become fashionable, is a most dangerous form of worldliness; modish piety is about as perilous as popular vice—and *far more delusive*. Only the religion which is according to the pattern shown in the mount will stand in the judgment. "Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; *whose praise is not of men, but of God.*" The people who think only of conforming to God's will find no difficulty in accepting God's Son.

10. *The authority of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Sonship of Jesus stand or fall together.* Men who believe Moses trust Christ, and men who reject Moses reject Christ: "For had ye be-



lieved Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (verses 46 and 47). Just as modern rationalists and "redactors" have cast discredit on the Hebrew Scriptures, in the same proportion have they diminished faith in Christ. Some say they have increased and strengthened faith. Where? In Germany? In our own country? Where are the converts to the faith of God who have been converted by rationalizing preachers?

XI.

THE DIVINE SON MINISTERING TO  
HUMBLE MEN.

8

JOHN VI. 1-14.

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 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?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

## XI.

### THE DIVINE SON MINISTERING TO HUMBLE MEN.

THIS incident is full of instruction as revealing the mind of the Master while ministering to the needs of the people and giving the disciples great lessons in Christian service.

1. *Observe how Jesus, as One who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, was patient with the intrusion of the people upon the solitude which he sought, and how kindly he dealt with their interruption of his plan for a season of repose.* The twelve had just returned from the mission upon which he had sent them when they “went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.” (Luke ix. 6.) They had met with success, and they now gathered themselves together and “told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.” (Mark vi. 30.) The success of the new movement had reached the ears of the wicked Herod, the slayer of John the Baptist, and with evil design he “sought to see Jesus.” The animus of Herod, the state of pop-

ular excitement in the nation, and the need of rest upon the part of the apostles after the completion of the work to which he had sent them impelled the Lord to seek a place of refuge and retirement outside the jurisdiction of Antipas; and so he said to the twelve: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat." (Mark vi. 31.) But the perplexed and excited "people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him." (Mark vi. 33.) But Jesus did not chide them for disturbing his quiet rest. He did not repel them from intruding upon his "still hour." Submission to interruptions was the habit of his toilsome life. The record is that when he came out and saw the multitude he "was moved with compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." (Matt. vi. 34.) What an example of the Good Shepherd is here presented to all undershepherds, whether preachers or teachers! It requires a great deal of the Christly spirit for one to endure unseasonable interruptions from intrusive people.

2. *Jesus cares for the bodily wants of men.* His compassion was moved not alone by their shepherdless souls, but also by their weary, hungry, and fainting bodies, as we may learn by comparing this scene with a former occasion in his ministry: "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, *because they fainted*, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. ix. 36.) In the final judgment, when his shepherdly eye runs through the myriads of all nations gathered before him, we are told by himself that he will take exact and testing account of how men have dealt with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. (Matt. xxv. 32-46.)

The rich man might in heartlessness have left Lazarus unfed, or with no more than crumbs to eat, at his gate; but Jesus welcomed as guests this hungry multitude to his resting place in the desert, healing their sicknesses and feeding them from his own bountiful hand.

3. *He used natural resources as the base and material of the supernatural stock of food he supplied.* He might have caused manna to fall from heaven, even as the Israelites had been fed in the wilderness; but he chose rather to use the

loaves and fishes which were found in the possession of a lad in the company. He might have made wine without water; but not till, in obedience to his command, the servants had filled the waterpots to the brim (John ii. 7) did he put forth his wonder-working power. Such was always his habit, and this course was adopted by him with design. He thus sought to teach his followers that, as he used the means found in natural resources, even when he worked the greatest of his miracles, so also in working the greater wonders of his saving grace he would use natural, plain men as his instruments. It is not too much to say that the lad and his loaves were necessary to Jesus on this occasion. Could the boy ever forget how the Master had used his scanty stock of food to feed the thousands gathered there? Even a boy may be necessary to the Lord's greatest work; and he can turn the youngest and weakest of his children to great account in the advancement of his kingdom.

4. *Duty is not measured by one's natural ability or resources.* From the text, "Give ye them to eat," Horace Bushnell, in his "Sermons for the New Life," gives a most admirable and suggestive discourse, in which he shows that "men are often, and properly, put under obligation

to do that for which they have in themselves no present ability." The barley loaves and fishes of the lad, together with the two hundred pence in the bag which Judas carried, would not have been enough to feed the multitude, concerning whom Jesus said to the apostles, "Give ye them to eat" (Luke ix. 13); but it was their duty to obey his command, nevertheless. God requires none of us to do more than is possible; but "*all things are possible to him that believeth.*" (Mark ix. 23.) So with Paul we may say: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.) We are, therefore, responsible not only for what we can do by natural strength and means, but also for what we may do by his supernatural aid and by his divine resources placed at our disposal. We are responsible for all we might be and might do by drawing freely upon his boundless stores of grace. The law of the kingdom is: "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." (Matt. xxv. 29.) In obeying the Master every man may expect increments of power adequate to the tasks to which he is sent, and the absence of such accrued power in the case of any Christian is evidence of unfaithfulness to his trust.



5. *The loaves and fishes were multiplied in the process of breaking and distributing them.* The Lord could as easily have multiplied the stock as a whole; but he chose to do it in the act of breaking and distributing, that the apostles and all his followers might see that supernatural aid is given men in the act of doing duty; they acquire the ability for doing duty by doing it. Our powers are unfolded in the midst of the unfolding responsibilities of Providence. What a forfeiture of apostleship, what a paralysis of faith would have come to the apostles if they had waited to obey the command of the Saviour until the supply of food had grown under their eyes to a sufficiency for the multitude!

6. *There was orderliness in the method of Jesus.* Jesus said, "Make the men sit down"; or, as Mark says, "by companies [a word in the Greek is used which means "beds of a flower garden"] upon the green grass." (Mark vi. 39.) Without such order this multitude of hungry men would have crowded out the weak women and children, and confusion would have nourished selfishness, as it always does. "God is not the author of confusion." (1 Cor. xiv. 33.) "Nothing was done until the crowding and confusion had ceased; and even the divine benefi-

cence waits until the turbulent mass has become quiet, settled down into serried lines, the five thousand making two perfect squares." (Burton.)

7. *In nature and in grace God is economical.* "When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." In the plenitude of his power he made bread "enough and to spare," but none to waste. We know not to what use the gathered fragments were devoted subsequently, but we may be sure they served some good end. Our opulent Lord is no squanderer of his Father's abundant gifts. He is not a prodigal Son, but a provident Saviour.

8. *In all his works Jesus was utterly unselfish.* To feed himself when hungry, during his temptation in the wilderness, he refused to make one smallest pebble into bread. (Matt. iv. 5.) But twice he worked miracles to feed the hungry people who resorted to him.

9. *The unselfish use of supernatural power marks Jesus as a supernatural Person.* "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." It was not the miracle alone which impressed them, but

his method and spirit and purpose in working it. False teachers have professed to work miracles, and they have done many "lying wonders"; but their deeds have always been pock-marked with human selfishness and blemished with earthly littleness. The miracles of Jesus only are all that are recorded in history which a true God can afford to acknowledge as his own. They only comport with the majesty and morality and unselfishness of the divine nature. They are like the great mountains which reach unto the clouds, and bear on their massive fronts the sign manual of Jehovah, attesting the fact that they were not set up by the puny hand of man. An impostor might as easily metamorphose himself into a god as to work the miracles of Christ. He might mimic their mystery, as has been done often, but he could not mount to the height of their moral majesty. The divine deeds of Jesus become him "as a crown becomes a king." They issue from his divine nature and, as water rises to the level of its source, they rise to heavenly heights and in their limpid depths reflect the features of "the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

XII.

OUT OF TEMPTATION INTO A TEMPEST.

JOHN VI. 15-21.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.

20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

## XII.

### OUT OF TEMPTATION INTO A TEMPEST.

IF we would understand clearly this interesting passage, we must study it in connection with the parallel passages in Matthew xiv. 22-33 and Mark vi. 45-51, in which also this wonderful miracle of Jesus is recorded.

It was a miracle wrought especially for the benefit of the twelve, and might be taken as a lesson for preachers. After the miracle of the multiplied loaves and fishes, the people who were fed were ready to take Jesus "by force to make him a king." It is evident that the twelve sympathized with this worldly purpose; for as yet they had very imperfect views of the spirituality of his kingdom. Jesus perceived how the placing of any earthly crown on his head would involve the corruption and defeat of the kingdom of heaven which he had come to set up on the earth. This proposal of the multitude to make him a king was virtually the renewal of the proposition of the devil in the wilderness to give him all "the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them" (Matt.

iv. 8), and he put it away on this occasion with the same energetic refusal with which he rejected it in the desert. He "sent the people away." Alone he went "into a mountain to pray," grieved, doubtless, with the foolish ambition of the twelve and disappointed that the people had so poor a conception of his character and mission. He sought communion with God, because there was not among men a soul who understood, let alone sympathized with, his spiritual purpose. There was no possibility of ever leading the world to comprehend and accept the kingdom of heaven, unless he could purge the minds of the twelve of their false idea; for they were to be the future agents of that kingdom. Accordingly he "*constrained*" them "to get into the ship" and sail away from the temptation which was too much for them. He sent them into the storm to teach them lessons of faith which they could not learn otherwise, and which they would need to keep ever in mind in order to fulfill their apostolic mission when he would no longer be among them and the ship of the Church should be committed to their seamanship.

1. *A tempest on the sea is less dangerous than temptation on the shore.* The Master fore-

saw the storm which would break on the little boat when he constrained the disciples to sail away from the people who sought to make him a king. He sent them into the tempest to save them from the greater danger which beset them by reason of the worldly suggestion of the people with which they too readily sympathized. It was easier for him to save them from the tempest than to rescue them from the temptation. The winds had no will to resist his word, but human spirits required to be led through danger in order to save them from spiritual disaster worse than shipwreck. In the little company of the twelve was embarked the hope of the world, for by them the new kingdom was to be eventually set up. If they made shipwreck of faith on the unsuspected rocks of worldly ambition, what must have been the effect upon the history of mankind! Better a thousandfold to have them tossed on the billows and filled with fear than tempted to a course of conduct which would have been the undoing of themselves and the loss of all others whom they were called to save. And to this day the Lord often delivers his children from temptation by sending them into trial. There are prevenient tribulations as well as



prevenient grace. St. Peter, who was quite conspicuous in the events of this passage, wrote later out of his own experience: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." (2 Pet. ii. 9.) St. Paul teaches us that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape." (1 Cor. x. 13.) The way of escape which he makes for the soul is often found in a way of danger to the body, in order that his children may learn that they are wholly dependent upon him for their security and deliverance. "It may not be *your way*, and it may not be my way; and yet in his own way the Lord will provide" for both soul and body.

2. *Divine deliverance is often delayed that faith may be more perfectly developed.* Jesus came not to the rescue of the disciples from the storm until "the fourth watch of the night"—*i. e.*, between three and six o'clock in the morning. St. Mark says, "He saw them toiling in rowing" (Mark vi. 48); they were never out of his sight or out of his heart. But he came not to them at once. It was best for them that he should not come too soon. Their darkest hour was just before the dawn. It is ever

thus. "It may not be *your time*, and it may not be my time; but yet in his own time the Lord will provide." And his time is always the best time.

3. *Our divine Deliverer is often most active on our behalf when to us he seems most unreal.* "When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." When they were mistaking him for a phantom, he was never more divine and never more energetic. However on other occasions he might have repressed in self-humiliation his divine power, in this hour he was putting it forth in the most sublime manifestation ever granted them to witness. They discerned not how divine he was; and so do we, like they, fail sometimes to see him as he is.

He hides himself so wondrously,  
As though there were no God;  
He is least seen when all the powers  
Of ill are most abroad.

It is not so, but so it looks;  
And we lose courage then;  
And doubts will come if God hath kept  
His promises to men.

Thrice blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is on the field, when he  
Is most invisible.

—*Faber.*

4. "*Because I live, ye shall live also.*" Jesus saith unto them, Be of good cheer: *it is I*; be not afraid." The word is rather: "I am; be not afraid." So said God to Moses: "Say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." God, the self-existent, could as easily die as desert the soul that trusts him. When later he sent forth the apostles to make a conquest of the world, he said, "Lo, *I am with you*"; not "Lo, *I will be with you.*"

5. *The presence of our Deliverer calms storms and disperses doubts.* "Then they willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." So St. John states the effect of his coming into the ship. Matthew says: "And when they [Jesus and Peter] were come into the ship, the wind ceased." (Matt. xiv. 32.) Mark says: "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered." (Mark vi. 51.) The winds were hushed by his presence, while tides of worship and adoration swept over their souls. "Then they that were in the ship came and *worshiped him*, saying, Of a truth *thou art the Son of God.*" Before this

time they had been with him in a storm (Mark iv. 35-41); but the circumstances were very different from those of the present occasion. At that time he had not forced them out of temptation and sent them into the storm; the tempest overtook them in the daytime, near the close of the day; their tired Lord was with them, although asleep "in the hinder part of the ship on a pillow." On this occasion he was away, they knew not where; they were without him in the midst of a fearful storm, which raged all night. The effects of the two miracles upon their minds were as different as the circumstances attending them. After witnessing the miracle on the former occasion, they said: "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark iv. 41.) After he calmed the storm on this occasion, they said: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." (Matt. xiv. 33.) They had learned the lesson which they needed; they had learned that no earthly crown, given by the suffrages of worldly men, was fit for his head who showed himself Lord of the mightiest forces of nature. They worshiped him! And their worship was preparing them for their work, for men are not qualified to do

his work until they have done him homage. His workers must be worshipers.

Jesus was displeased when they sympathized with the purpose of the people to heap political honors upon him, but he accepted their worship when they adored him as the Son of God. If he was not the Son of God, he was the vainest and most blasphemous of the sons of men. He never declined the worship of any one, high or low, while he walked in the earth. When St. John fell down at the feet of the angel of the Apocalypse to worship him, the angel said: "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: *worship God.*" (Rev. xix. 10.) But on this occasion the apostle heard no such words from the lips of Jesus when men fell down before him. If John had not believed Jesus to be divine, he would have been forced to consider him less virtuous than the angel.

Jesus knew perfectly his own rank in the universe, and we cannot believe he was pure and true if he allowed men to offer him honors which cannot be offered to any but God without idolatry and blasphemy. "If he was not God, he was not good."

XIII.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

JOHN VI. 22-51.

22 The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

24 When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God, etc.

### XIII.

#### CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE.

THE day after Jesus had fed the multitude, whose suggestion to make him a king had so deeply grieved and disappointed him, they pursued him in boats to Capernaum. They followed him, not because they were devoted to such a Messiah as he proposed to be, but because they wished to use him for worldly and fleshly ends. They went seeking him, not that they might serve him, but that he might serve them. They were not unlike multitudes now who desire the earthly fruits of Christianity without accepting the heavenly Founder of Christianity. They did not prize him as the bread of life, but sought him as a maker of bread for the physical man.

1. *In seeking Christ men are not to put anything they get from him above what they can find in him.* These people first wanted to use him for a king; and seeing he refused that, they now desired to use him to satisfy their bodily hunger—degrading the Giver of life to the level of a chief baker or chief butler. And



many there be like them to-day. There are many who see that life in Christ brings social well-being, and they want him to come as a social reformer; others see that literature and art rise and flourish where his religion prevails, and they want him as the elevator of taste and the embellisher of civilization; others see the healing arts and health abound where he is known, and they want him as a mere healer of human bodies. But he will not endure that any gift of his love shall substitute the Giver, nor that any outward thing shall take the place of the interior life which springs alone from him. Wherefore he saith: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed." It was another way of saying that the "life is more than meat" (Matt. vi. 25), and another form of the exhortation, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33). Men must put first things first; otherwise the first things cease to be first.

2. *Men may not seek even religion as something separate from him.* "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work

the works of God?"—*i. e.*, do works agreeable to God. "He answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This utterance of Jesus agrees with the words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi. 6.) Let it be specially marked that the man of faith *seeks him*, and not anything outside of him. The Scriptures never tell us to seek religion, or to seek morality, or to seek any other good thing as a substitute for God himself. Morality and religion are the glowing reflection cast on the outward life from the person of Jesus in the heart.

3. *The belief of the intellect, which is coerced by signs, is not the faith by which Christ is received and God is pleased.* To Christ's demand that they must believe in order to work, they reply that he must first work before they could believe. They say: "What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?" etc. They wish to reverse the true moral order by putting seeing before believing; they wish to cancel faith

altogether and substitute the sight of signs for the trust of a person. They had seen the miracle of the loaves, but they did not consider it as great a wonder as that of the manna, and they demanded that Jesus should do some wonder as much greater than the fall of manna as the claims he put forth were higher than the claims of Moses. But just because Jesus was greater than Moses, and made a demand upon the hearts of men that neither Moses nor any other mere man could possibly make, he could not and would not dispense with faith in himself in order to make room for faith in a sign. He demanded the surrender of the will in a supreme moral act, and not the submission of the intellect to the reports of the senses. A religion of signs is a religion of the senses—a fleshly and fatal thing to employ as the basis of character and the source of spiritual life. Anything which compels belief really makes belief unnecessary, and shifts the center of man's moral gravity from the soul to the sight. Life developed from such a center is on too low a level to be heavenly in nature or enduring in power. To live with God above, men must get their life from the God who is above. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses

gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Thus solemnly spoke Jesus unto these Jews; and yet in a vague sort of way they continued to long for some good outside of him, and replied, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," reminding us of the sad and senseless words of the Samaritan woman: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." (John iv. 15.) And just as he stopped not short of revealing himself as the Messiah to the Samaritan woman, he on this occasion declared: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He will offer to the hungry soul nothing lower than himself, and with himself he "freely gives us all things." (Rom. viii. 32.) He gave them to understand, therefore, that their difficulty was not in the fact that they had not seen enough, but in the fact that they had not yielded to that inward moral movement which springs from the influence of the Father's will on the soul, with which all the acts and characteristics of the Son are in harmony, which leads

the soul to come to the Son, and which forbids that the Son should ever cast out such a soul—the heavenward movement which culminates in eternal life.

4. *Belief resting in facts which appeal to the senses is at last deluded and destroyed by the very senses which it has trusted.* These Jews, unable to elicit from Jesus a sign upon which to found their faith, proceeded to recall facts by which to confirm their doubts. They murmured because he set up a claim which their feeble and uninformed minds could not reconcile with his humble origin and peasant parentage. “They said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” Nor did Jesus tell them, in reply to their objection, anything of the facts of his miraculous birth—of how an angel announced his coming beforehand, and of how the heavenly host sang over Bethlehem, the “House of Bread” (which is the meaning of “Bethlehem”), when he came, and of how the star shone above his manger-cradle. If he had told them these things, they would have believed him less than before; they would have said he was speaking falsely. The way of true belief

is not through outward signs, but through inward sincerity.

5. *True faith must stand in the power of God and not in the wisdom of men.* (1 Cor. ii. 5.) In reply to their objection to his *earthly parentage*, Jesus appealed to the drawing of his *Heavenly Father* by which men taught of God perceive his unearthly character and saving power and come unto him. It should be observed that it is a drawing and not a driving. The Jews wished signs to drive them to accept him without any sense of need of him. If life—life of a superior type, called by him “everlasting life”—is ever raised up in a human soul, it must arise from the voluntary response of the heart to this drawing of the Heavenly Father; it cannot spring from such dead things as enticing words, or enthralling marvels, or convincing arguments, or coercive demonstrations. It must come from freely assimilating the bread of life—accepting the Son of God. No physical vision of God, even though a man could see God (verse 46), could give to a soul life apart from the Son accepted in the heart by faith. Jesus as the Son of God is the supreme object of trust, and the faith in him by which men come to God is not mediated by out-

ward visions, but by the cordial devotion of the will to him in an internal and divinely efficacious self-surrender. The relation of the Jewish fathers to the manna of the wilderness was that of the body to a dead thing which had appeared in time, and they died, as was inevitable. But the relation of the soul to the living bread which comes down from heaven filled with life forces of timelessness is such that "a man may eat thereof, and not die."

6. *Not anything that Jesus says or does is the bread of life, but himself is that bread.* Men, to be saved, must not simply believe doctrines about him, but they must believe *him* and accept *him*. Said a triumphant apostle in sight of near-by death: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.) "Abstract truth we can make little of at first hand; it needs to be embodied in a living form before we can live on it. Even God is remote and abstract, and non-Christian theism makes thin-blooded and spectral worshipers; it is when the Word becomes flesh, when the hidden reason of all things takes human form and steps out on the earth before us, that truth be-

comes nutritive and God our life." (Marcus Dods.)

7. *If Christ is the Bread of Life, he is life's supreme need, and not a mere moral luxury for the uses of culture or refinement.* Men can get on without many things, but bread they *must have*. "So it is with Christ. We must have Christ or die in our sins. Bread is food that suits all. Some cannot eat meat, and some cannot eat vegetables; but all like bread. It is food for both the prince and the pauper. So it is with Christ. He is just the Saviour that meets the wants of every class. Bread is food that we need daily. Other kinds of food we take, perhaps, only occasionally; but we want bread every morning and evening of our lives. So it is with Christ. There is no day in our lives but we need his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, and his grace. Well may he be called 'the Bread of Life.'" (Canon Ryle.)

"Man shall not live by bread alone," but he may live by Christ alone. Jesus and his salvation are indispensable; all else, even the best of earthly things, may be spared if we possess him. Mercies of every sort are good only as they lead us to him. The best things



become bad things if they draw us away from him. "Nothing that grows out of the soil of earth will feed a human soul. We were made for God and for heaven, and must feed our immortal nature upon heavenly bread. Nothing but bread will satisfy hunger; nothing but Christ will meet the cravings of a life."

To hunger for him is to have him; to desire him is to find him. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

XIV.

SOME TESTING TEACHINGS.

10

JOHN VI. 52-71.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

## XIV.

### SOME TESTING TEACHINGS.

CHRIST began his ministry in Judea, and for a season all went well. But it was not long before the people who followed him showed clearly that they did not understand, or did not appreciate, what he was and what he proposed. They followed him with the hope of using him for earthly and political ends. Therefore he left Jerusalem and the region round about, and went to Galilee at an early day in his ministry. After he had taught and toiled for some months in Galilee, the same result followed there which had come to pass in Judea: multitudes followed him for healing and feeding, and some were ready to "take him by force, to make him a king" (John vi. 15). Thus he was again disappointed; for if the people had nothing more than a carnal interest in him, it was evident that his spiritual purpose found no sympathetic response in their hearts. He could not consent to abandon his spiritual kingdom for any earthly crown, and it was necessary for him to sift his followers and find

who among them were attached to him for what he really was and actually intended. Accordingly he took occasion from the miracle of the multiplied loaves and fishes, and what followed it, to speak the testing words which are recorded in this passage. His spiritual teaching then, as now, gave rise to disputings and murmurings.

1. *It is the way of carnal minds to reject spiritual truth because they cannot explain the method of divine operation.* To the lofty teaching of Jesus concerning the bread of life these disputatious Jews responded: “*How* can this man give us his flesh to eat?” In like manner Nicodemus said in reply to our Lord’s teaching concerning the new birth, “*How* can a man be born when he is old?” (John iii. 4) and “*How* can these things be?” (John iii. 9.) So also the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well said to Jesus about the water of life: “*Whence* then hast thou that living water?” (John iv. 11.) Minds dimmed by the material cannot comprehend the spiritual; they therefore perplex themselves with shallow questions about *the how* of spiritual things. They assume that what does not conform to the way of the material processes of nature is not to be accepted.

Sometimes this materialism runs to downright denial of the spiritual, as in the case of those in our day who deny the supernatural. In others it runs to the carnalizing of the spiritual, as in the case of the Romanists, who insist on the transubstantiation of the elements in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the modern Spiritualists and "Christian Scientists" (so called), who degrade the spiritual to the service of the material. The source of all these things, contradictory to one another though they seem, is the same: they spring from sensualizing spiritual things. They demand "natural law in the spiritual world," and in the end doubt and discredit the spiritual world altogether.

2. *Jesus never lowers the demands of spiritual truth to the level of carnal minds, nor makes compromising concessions in order to win worldly adherents.* When some murmured at his words he was so far from watering down to insipid meaninglessness what he had said before touching the "bread of life" that he did rather make it stronger. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth

my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." The drinking of blood literally was unlawful to a Jew (Lev. vii. 26, 27; xvii. 10-14); but the law which forbade the drinking of it was based expressly on its sacrificial sanctity. When the Jews, therefore, heard Jesus utter these words, they were obliged to understand that he required of them the appropriation of his sacrificial life if they attached any definite meaning whatever to his declaration. They were told that true life could not be had outside of him as its source; that, both now and hereafter, spiritual and eternal life was possible to them only who received his flesh and blood as the aliment of their souls. According to this teaching, his followers and he were participants in a community of life, even as a branch draws vitality from the branch in which it abides. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John xv. 4.) This spiritual union, which comes from one life running through both the Saviour and the saved, was described

as being as close as the intimate life of the Father and Son: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Such teaching was not calculated to attract men of worldly hearts and mundane minds; it would test and try them rather. But the Master would not accommodate the revelation of the truth to the requirements of fleshly reason. God's truth is surrendered when it is subjected to human demands; it is dishonored when it is adulterated, and dethroned when it is distrusted. A religion which wins the acceptance of the world by compromising concessions is more conquered than conquering in the midst of its seeming triumphs. Jesus refused to wear the spurious crown of a corrupted faith, and advanced rather than reduced his demands when carnally minded men complained of his teaching. "Many, therefore, of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" If he had explained away the supernatural in order to conciliate the



favor of these sodden slaves of the world, he would have reduced Christianity from the level of a divine revelation to the plane of a mere system of philosophy. Some mistaken men are advising the Church to adopt the method which Jesus utterly refused to adopt on this occasion. Surely spiritual men will not be beguiled by such purblind advice. "We have not so learned Christ." We continue holding to the mysteries of "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," even to the eternal preëxistence of the Son of God and his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the great truths here asserted. To these high things we adhere, let them depart who will.

3. *Spiritual life comes from faith in Christ begotten by a quickening spirit through life-giving truth.* "It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Saints are such as have been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Pet. i. 23.) This strong apostolic teaching is justified by the Master's words on this and other occasions; for he claimed for his words a purging and cleansing

power: "Now ye are *clean through the word* which I have spoken unto you." (John xv. 3.)

4. *We are called to deal with a spiritual Lord, who looks upon the inner life of the soul; and nothing less than "truth in the inward parts" will satisfy the demands of Him with whom we have to do.* This is the significance of the penetrating words of Jesus: "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said: Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." He spoke these words of warning because he knew that some of his followers were not drawn after him by any divine attraction, and he sought to reveal to them the hollowness of their lives and the peril of their position. If the faithless souls to whom he spoke, including the treacherous Judas, had heeded the words which they heard, they might have been saved. But they refused "the Bread of Life" because they had no heaven-inspired hunger for it.

5. *Men may have faith enough to follow Christ for a season who turn away from him in testing times.* "From that time many of

his disciples went back and walked no more with him." The winds of worldly-mindedness blew away the chaff; only the good wheat remained.

6. *Only they cling faithfully to the Lord who are held to him by bonds of spiritual life.* "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." It was a fine case of the heroism of spiritual life when these men stood firmly by Jesus, though all the world left him. The Judeans had turned away from him, and now his Galilean followers were departing; but Peter and his fellow disciples clung to him with the daring devotion of men who felt that they derived their very life from him. "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" and no man will give up all for Christ unless he feels that he must have spiritual life, whatever else he may lose, and that Jesus only can give him such life.

Many modern methods of winning men to the Church, and holding them when won, must end inevitably in disappointment and failure.

All plans that proceed on the idea that men can be held to Christ by any other than a spiritual life can work no permanent good. “Salvation by soup and soap” is only skin-deep; multitudes drawn together by such attractions will soon depart. Nothing short of the forces of life are sufficient to retain men in the service of the Prince of Life. The world of secular learning has led away young men, who loved that world and who had no life in Christ, to deny his deity and forsake him in order to keep their standing with circles which they regarded as “scholarly.” All sorts of domineering worlds have driven others to leave Christ. But spiritual souls, who find in him the springs of their religious life, stay with him despite the influence of a “frowning world,” be it never so learned, so modish, or so powerful. Such living and heroic souls do not echo current opinion, but bow to the majesty of incarnate and eternal Truth.

7. *A man may be the companion of saints, and yet serve the kingdom of Satan.* “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.”

The words *“being one of the twelve”* bring in contrast the heavenly companionship and the hellish conduct of Judas. High privileges cannot assure us of high destiny. Great opportunities do not always end in great attainments. “It is neither place, nor light, nor company, nor opportunities, but grace that man needs to make him a Christian. With grace we may serve God in the most difficult position—like Daniel in Babylon, Obadiah in Ahab’s court, and the saints in Nero’s household. Without grace we may live in the full sunshine of Christ’s countenance and yet, like Judas, be miserably cast away. Then let us never rest till we have grace reigning in our souls. Grace is to be had for the asking. There is one sitting at the right hand of God who has said, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you.’ (Matt. vii. 7.) The Lord Jesus is more willing to give grace than man is to seek it. If men have it not, it is because they do not ask for it.” (Canon Ryle.)

XV.

SLAVES OF TIME AND THE TIMELESS  
ONE.

JOHN VII. 1-13.

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4 For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

6 The Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

## XV.

### SLAVES OF TIME AND THE TIMELESS ONE.

IN the prologue of this Gospel St. John says of Christ: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John i. 4, 5, 10, 11.) These sad statements are exemplified by the incidents recorded in the chapter to the study of which we now come. In the preceding chapter the evangelist showed the culmination of Christ's Galilean ministry, after which crisis "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (chapter vi. 66). Now he proceeds to record some incidents which occurred six months later, in order to show how he met again a similar rejection at Jerusalem. In recording these fierce oppositions to him, John does not lose sight of the purpose, which runs through his entire Gospel, to prove that "Jesus



is the Christ, the Son of God" (chapter xx. 31). On the contrary, he selects these hostile manifestations to show how divine he was. By placing him in contrast with men of worldly mind, he makes his heavenly glory more manifest. Light is never more self-evidencing than when it shines through deep darkness, although the darkness may "comprehend it not."

The Jewish leaders in both Galilee and Judea had reached a point of murderous bitterness in their opposition to him. They could not treat with contemptuous indifference One whose mighty deeds and wondrous words had impressed so profoundly the nation that multitudes had come to believe that he was the promised Messiah and many were ready to make him their king. The public mind was agitated, and he was the chief subject of discussion in all circles. Opinion was greatly divided concerning him, but none affected to ignore him. At the outset of the ministry of John the Baptist St. Luke says: "The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not." (Luke iii. 15.) But a similar state of things was far more tense now. Men were not only musing in their hearts, but muttering their

musings aloud. At this moment came the great Feast of Tabernacles. On account of the hostility of the Jewish authorities to Jesus, which arose from the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, he left Jerusalem in the early spring and went back to Galilee without waiting for the Passover. He fed the pilgrims on their way to the feast, but he himself remained in Galilee, "because the Jews sought to kill him." Nevertheless, both his words and his works were reported at Jerusalem, and all classes waited eagerly to see if he would attend the Feast of Tabernacles or absent himself from it, as he had done in the case of the Passover.

The Feast of Tabernacles was observed as a grateful memorial of the gracious protection given by Jehovah to the nation during its wanderings in the wilderness, and at the same time it was a joyous celebration of "the harvest home"—such a celebration as would be if we in the United States observed Christmas and Thanksgiving Day together for ten days with religious services and social festivities. Josephus and Philo call it "the holiest and greatest feast," and it was known among the Jews as "*the* feast." "Will he stay away from such an occasion?" was the question asked by all classes,

including his "brethren" according to the flesh. He went up to the feast and taught; and in the recorded events of the period are disclosed the controversy between faith and unbelief at Jerusalem, the conflict of the Light of the World and the world of darkness, the issue between the slaves of the time and the Lord of all time.

1. *Time-serving men cannot comprehend the Christ nor wisely advise concerning the conduct of his cause.* "His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee."

On an occasion before this his brethren had shown their incapacity to understand him.

(Matt. xii. 46-50; Mark iii. 31-35; Luke viii. 19-21.) They were Hebrews of the Hebrews, in servile subjection to the religious currents and the ecclesiastical authorities of their time. They were alarmed at any token that indicated a rupture upon his part with the leaders and teachers whom they revered and feared. They hesitated, if they did not absolutely refuse, to accept him as the Messiah. Nevertheless, they entertained for him a certain affectionate interest, and they believed him to be at least a prophet. They were puzzled by him. Perhaps an element of vanity and concern for the credit of the family entered also into their feelings. At any rate, if he claimed to be the Messiah and did miracles in Galilee to support the claim, let him go up to the national capital, at the greatest of the feasts, and make good his claims before the assembled nation and end his conflict with the national leaders by convincing proofs of his Messiahship. They urged him to be as bold and open as his claims were great and his works were wonderful. They appealed to him to take this course in the interest of his Judean disciples, who otherwise might fall away from him, as many in Galilee already had fallen away from him. But he did not pro-

pose to be such a Messiah as they conceived, nor did he intend to conform his conduct to their time-distorted notions. He said to them what he had said to his mother at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: "Mine hour is not yet come." (John ii. 4.) His movements were not to be directed by the suggestions of men, however near and dear they might be; but he would act only on the monitions of his Father in heaven. Doubtless his brethren felt that the Jewish rulers were too good and true to reject the Messiah when once they were given adequate evidence of his Messiahship. They could not believe that the religious world, of which they were a part, could hate him, since to them that world seemed so amiable and holy. But they knew neither the nature of the world in which they moved, nor the character of the true Messiah. Jesus knew both the temper of the Jews and the nature of his Messianic kingdom; and he knew there was between the Jewish hierarchy and his spiritual government an irreconcilable conflict, which eventually would result in his crucifixion and ultimately end in their destruction.

There are many nowadays who, like these brethren of Jesus, presume to advise about

how Christ's acceptance by the world can be most easily procured. They proceed on the fundamental error that it is a very good world, which is not wrong at heart about Jesus, but only mistaken in its head. They feel a sort of friendship for our Lord and his Church, and with airs of superior wisdom they offer suggestions by which the world may be won to him. From all such let us turn away. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) It cannot be conciliated by compromise; it must be conquered by the cross. These mistaken brethren of Jesus found this true at last; for they were of the Church at Pentecost (Acts ii. 14), and endured persecution, doubtless, from some of the very rulers whom they trusted now at the Feast of Tabernacles, and whom Jesus so thoroughly distrusted.

2. *Men tossed on the conflicting currents of the times cannot come to settled conclusions about the timeless One.* "But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much mur-

muring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.”

Here is a great mingling of contrary opinions and conflicting emotions. Some ask contemptuously about him, “Where is *that fellow?*” for that is the implication of the question, “Where is he?” There was much “murmuring,” or “buzzing,” about him. All circles were talking about him privately with ill-suppressed warmth. But there was no agreement. His miraculous deeds and marvelous words made an impression favorable to him, and the well-known antagonism of the authorities to his claims left an opposite impression upon the minds of many. So the multitude were tossed to and fro like light craft on a turbulent sea. It must always be that men who try to follow Christ and agree with worldly authorities can find no rest to their souls. Current opinion and eternal truth seldom, if ever, coincide. It is pitiful to observe some young men trying the impossible task of walking with the rationalists and worshiping the Christ. They go around perpetually “buzzing” about the “most recent books”; and one cannot foretell at sun-up what they will believe at sundown concern-

ing the Eternal Son of God, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." They are little better than theological gypsies trying to tell the fortune of the Church by the palmistry of academic impostors. Their faith stands only in the wisdom of men, and hence never stands at all, but moves every day with the migratory cogitations of the bookmakers.

3. *Timeservers are timid in the presence of the foes of the Eternal Son.* "Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews." By "*the Jews*" St. John means the Jewish authorities, who were exponents of the national life. These persecuting leaders, blind guides of the blind, had crushed the spirit of fair-minded inquiry. The men who believed that Christ was good dared not speak their minds, and those who believed he was deceiving the people dared not oppose him, lest their judgment should be rejected by the multitudes at the feast who had seen his miracles and heard his utterances in Galilee. The people were afraid of their leaders, and the leaders were afraid of their people. It was a sort of reign of terror to all, because none were brave enough to accept the truth about him and take the consequences of honest, whole-hearted loy-



alty to the truth. It was a conscienceless crowd, confused by cowardice. Great are the pains and the perils of men who suppress their convictions of truth for fear of the consequences! "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. vi. 23.) When one sees clearly the truth, he must obey it, even though he may imagine that in his times and amid his surroundings he cannot afford to do so. One can afford anything better than he can afford to live in moral darkness.

XVI.

ASTONISHING DOCTRINE.

JOHN VII. 14-31.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

## XVI.

### ASTONISHING DOCTRINE.

AFTER his brethren had gone up to the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus himself went, "as it were in secret," that he might avoid giving occasion to any efforts of Galilean zealots to make him king. When the feast was about half over, he appeared unheralded in the temple and taught, fulfilling the words of the prophet, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." (Mal. iii. 1.) He had been there before, cleansing it of unholy things (John ii. 13-25) and working miracles of mercy under its shadow (John v. 1-16). He was there now to teach and declare himself most explicitly. When he ended the Sermon on the Mount, "the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Matt. vii. 28, 29); but his discourse on this occasion was far more astonishing. All that he said is not recorded—very little of it, indeed—but from the interruptions of his auditors and from his answers to them, which are recorded, we know that he asserted most clearly and cogently his divine

nature and authority. He was such a Teacher as made himself and his doctrine one; he could not teach truth without revealing himself as the Truth.

1. *The doctrine of Jesus transcends all the teachings of men.* “And the Jews marveled saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?” His enemies were forced to admit his learning, even as the doctors in the temple wondered “at his understanding and answers” when he was twelve years of age. (Luke ii. 47.) But how had he acquired this learning? He had not been trained in any of the rabbinic schools. He claimed nothing from any theological party or school of thought; and none acknowledged him as a disciple or exponent of its teachings. These lynx-eyed Jews did not for a moment undertake to trace his wisdom to any school of the ancients, as some modern skeptics have tried to do. On the contrary, they complained of him just because his doctrine did not come from an authoritative school; they asserted thereby his absolute originality. In this they were right.

The teaching of Jesus is beyond the power of a merely human mind to originate it. The evangelists could not have invented it. On its

face are the marks of its superhuman authorship. His hearers in the temple felt his power, and in all ages since then, wherever it has been proclaimed, the loftiest intellects have yielded to its heavenly force. It is from above even as he is from above.

2. *The doctrine of Jesus is a revelation from heaven.* Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." The popular teachers of the day were accustomed to refer to some noted rabbi for their authority. Jesus appealed to no human authority for indorsement, but to the very highest authority, even the Father in heaven. On another occasion he had said: "I receive not testimony from man." (John v. 34.) When he thus claimed to bring a revelation from the Father and to be sent by the Father, was he mistaken? If so, we cannot say "he was the wisest teacher the world ever saw"; for in that case he was mistaken about a matter of supreme importance. Or, did he speak with conscious falsehood? Then he was not good, and we cannot say "he was the best man the world ever saw"; for he spoke a blasphemous falsehood. Jesus was not a mistaken man nor a false man; he was not deceived about himself,

nor did he deceive others, when he said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."

3. *The truth of the doctrine of Jesus is discerned by every soul who wills to do the will of God.* "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." The great truth which Jesus presents in these words he had uttered before: "My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John v. 30.) He spoke truly, because he lived loyally to his Father's will; and he gives us to understand that, in common with himself, all truly loyal souls will know the truth on sight. It should be noted that he does not say, "If any man *does* God's will he shall know of the doctrine"; but, "If any man *wills* to do his will." It is not the "will" of the future tense which he uses, but the "will" of volition. The apprehension of moral truth is more a matter of the will than of the intellect. A clear intellect will not give the "purity of heart which sees God."

“The world by wisdom knew not God.” (1 Cor. i. 21.) A clean heart will clarify the mind.

In every department of knowledge we must conform our methods of investigation and discovery to the nature of the subject which we seek to understand. We study chemistry and physics in one way, and mathematics and philosophy in another way. To acquire knowledge of these earthly and material things we must employ earthly and material processes; but if we would apprehend heavenly and spiritual things we must rely upon heavenly and spiritual processes. These divine things lie not in the plane of the physical and carnal. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.) The knowledge of spiritual truth comes more from personal communion with God than from any exertion of human intellect; and God will not reveal himself to a man of perverse and rebellious will. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with



him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” (Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2.)

Jesus does not say that this spiritual process of knowing by obeying will yield a collection of plausible and defensible *speculative opinions*; it *yields knowledge*. Between theological opinions and religious knowledge there is a vast difference.

This spiritual process is not a matter of exceptional application, but it is in accordance with a universal and unvarying law. “If *any man* will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.” If spiritual knowledge were conditioned upon the power of the intellect and the opportunity for careful study, then it would be out of reach of the uneducated and toiling multitudes of earth who have neither the ability nor the leisure to weigh evidence, investigate history, study dead languages, master philosophies, and acquire sciences; but being dependent upon submissive obedience to the will of God, the humblest disciple may know more of divine things than the wisest of philosophers. Let us be thankful that it is as it is, and that “our faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. ii. 5). “Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank

thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” (Luke x. 21.)

4. *Rebellion against God's law leads men to superficial conclusions concerning the doctrine of Jesus and a malignant attitude toward God's Son.* “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers); and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” (John vii. 19-24.) The Jewish rulers, not the people, had originated the charge that Jesus was a demoniac (Matt. xii. 24-27; Luke vi. 15; Mark iii. 22-30). They charged him with healing on the Sabbath day as a means of destroying him (Mark iii. 6;

John v. 16) ; it was a pretext to secure his condemnation. But by their authority they were able to lead many of the people to accept their charge that he was possessed of a devil and was a Sabbath-breaker. It was a shallow judgment, born of wickedness, and resting on mere "appearance" of reason. In the case of circumcision, where they had no evil motive to lead them to pervert the Mosaic law, they interpreted it aright. There was no conflict between God's laws, and this they saw clearly enough until murderous purposes in their hearts against God's Son misled their exposition of the law. The mist in their minds rose from malice in their hearts. Jesus in obedience to law knew and taught the truth of God; while they by lives of disobedience fell into such mental darkness and moral misconceptions that they mistook the divine mercy for lawlessness and the sinless Son of God for a demoniac. The light that was in them had become darkness.

*5. Minds disobedient to God and dominated by worldly authorities fall into insoluble perplexities concerning the person and doctrine of Jesus which lead them to despairing doubt and direful darkness. "Then said some of them*

of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know, indeed, that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him." The men who were thus perplexed were not the Galileans who had come up to the feast, but Judeans, with less open minds—"some of them of Jerusalem." Such knowledge as they had of Jesus was more perplexing than satisfying to them. If he was not the Christ, they could not understand his boldness, nor account for the hesitation of the rulers to execute their purpose (which at Jerusalem was well known) to kill him. On the other hand, if he was the Christ, they could not account for his natural and human origin. And so they seesawed between apparently irreconcilable facts. If they had cared less for the authority of their blind leaders, and had yielded to the manifestly di-

vine truth which Jesus uttered, they might easily have solved the mystery of his origin. His genealogy was within their reach. Peasants like Peter and John and James had solved that problem; men of prominence like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were solving it correctly. But these doubters were beating about in the dark, stumbling over facts which they could not deny, and falling down at the feet of authorities whom they feared to resist. In our day these perplexed men have their successors. We have among us men who, at the bidding of academic scribes and philosophic Sadducees, deny the Virgin birth of Christ and accept a theory of purely naturalistic origin for him, and then vainly try to frame a consistent system to explain his person and teaching. The thing is impossible. The person and teaching of Christ are as indivisible as his seamless robe. We cannot logically hold to a fragment of him. If his Virgin birth be denied, there is no understanding his life and teaching and no comprehension of his resurrection. If we reject the Christ of the manger, we must turn away from the Teacher on the Mount.

Rationalists can do nothing with him; he is

too much for them. The Eternal sent him, and time-serving foes cannot overcome him. In the days of his sojourn in the flesh they could not against his will hasten by one moment the day of his death, "because his hour was not yet come." And now they cannot delay his coronation by anything they may say or do. He took his own time to descend into the grave, and he will take his own time to ascend to the throne of universal power in the earth.

*6. The future holds for us nothing better than Christ and nothing truer than his doctrine.* "And many people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" They could not conceive of a better Messiah than Jesus; nor can we.

John the Baptist once inquired of Christ: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. xi. 3.) The answer returned to the puzzled prophet of the wilderness was a recounting of the wonderful works he was doing. The account of his divine deeds was enough for the Baptist, even as the knowledge of his miracles was sufficient to convince some of them who at this Feast of Tabernacles "believed on him." His works then and now

ought to be enough for us. He is enough for all men through all time. "Christ no after age shall e'er outgrow." It is too late now for God to reveal himself, if he is not revealed in Christ. If Jesus be not God, he who is God has lost his chance with men. He has disappointed the past, the world forces of the present are bent away from him, and the future is irretrievably lost to him; he has waited too long to come. Jesus has shut up mankind to accept him or to be without God and without hope in the world. In the end men must choose Christianity or atheism; this is the only alternative which is left to logical minds.

XVII.

DOUBTINGS AND DISPUTINGS.



JOHN VII. 32-44.

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

## XVII.

### DOUBTINGS AND DISPUTINGS.

WHILE the perplexed multitudes were puzzling over the problem of Jesus and perishing for lack of spiritual life, their leaders were planning to kill the Prince of Life and extinguish "the hope of Israel." These worldly leaders felt that his power was their peril; that if the people followed him they would turn away from them; that if his kingdom was set up their authority would be pulled down. They found themselves in the most tragic position in which a human soul can be involved—a position in which desperate ambition antagonizes God and seeks to usurp his throne. Wherefore when the Son of the Father seemed to be stirring the heart of the nation they began to reason among themselves, saying, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." (Luke xx. 14.)

1. *Men who dispute Christ's claims dismiss their own differences that they may unite for the destruction of his cause.* "The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things

concerning him; and *the Pharisees and the chief priests* sent officers to take him." At this time "the chief priests" were Sadducees; like modern rationalists, they occupied lucrative positions in a spiritual organization while denying the existence of a spiritual world. "The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." (Acts xxiii. 8.) Thus radically did these two sects differ in their tenets; but they ignored their divergence in doctrine, and united to persecute Jesus. It was not a new thing for them to combine thus against our Lord. We read of how at another time "the Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven." (Matt. xvi. 1.) After Christ had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, this miserable coalition of the foes of his cause was maintained. We read in the Acts of the Apostles of a combination of even more variegated conspirators who opposed the way of faith: "And as they spake unto the people, the *priests*, and the *captain of the temple*, and the *Sadducees*, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead."

(Acts iv. 1, 2.) In St. Luke's account of the crucifixion we also read of how "Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day *Pilate and Herod were made friends together*: for before they were at enmity between themselves." (Luke xxiii. 11, 12.) In the prayer of the primitive Church under persecution are these words: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were *gathered together against the Lord*, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both *Herod*, and *Pontius Pilate*, with the *Gentiles*, and the *people of Israel*, were gathered together." (Acts iv. 26, 27.)

The good cause of Christ must always contend with the solidarity of evil. In the age-long contest of faith with unbelief it is, ever has been, and ever will be Christ against the whole world. The Pharisees were ritualists, and the Sadducees were rationalists; but these extremes met on common ground of opposition to Jesus. And it is so to-day; ritualism and rationalism, materialism and spiritualism, skepticism and superstition unite to combat spiritual Christianity.

2. *The disputatious doubters and persecuting foes of Christ cannot defeat his cause; but sooner than they know, and in a way they have not dreamed of, they may get rid of him forever.* "Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?" In these words of Jesus to his implacable foes there is a tone of sorrow and tenderness. His love for sinners and his wrath against sin lie close together in his heart. The effort of the Jewish rulers to arrest him was a reminder to him that his crucifixion was not far ahead; he foresaw that such hatred of him would run quickly to its cruel culmination. Beyond that dark hour he saw also his ascension into heaven, whither they could not come. He saw likewise the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Jewish nation, when they would

seek a Saviour and could not find him. These men, blinded by sinful prejudice, affected to ridicule his warning words to them and sneered at his mysterious intimation of a time coming when they would be unable to find him. In this reference to his going to the Gentiles, they meant to suggest that he proposed treason to the traditions of Israel. Nevertheless, while they affected to treat his speech with contempt, there is an accent in their muttered reply which seems to betray a haunting fear in their hearts that perhaps an awful doom is veiled in his enigmatic saying, as, indeed, there was.

As he came nearer and nearer to his crucifixion, these words, "a little while," were often on his lips. To other questioning objectors he said: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." (John xii. 35, 36.) But they rejected the heavenly beams that he was shedding upon them, and it is added immediately by the evangelist: "These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." He hid the light they would not have.

Very different are his words to his disciples who walked in the light: "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and *ye shall see me*: . . . because I go to the Father." (John xvi. 16-28.) When his life ended on Calvary, and he was laid in the grave, the unbelieving world saw him no more; from it he hid himself in the heavens. But his disappearance from the world at his ascension assured his speedy reappearance in the Spirit to all believing hearts.

3. *No opposition of doubters and disputers leads Christ to forget the wants of thirsty souls.* "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

At the Feast of Tabernacles there was a joyous custom observed, in which ceremonial a priest went with a golden pitcher from the temple to the fountain of Siloam, followed by all the people. Filling the pitcher at the foun-

tain, the priest bore it through the streets amid the fervent acclamations of the people, singing: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isa. xii. 3.) The rite was observed with such ecstasies of delight by the Jews that it was a saying among them: "Whoever had not witnessed it had never seen rejoicing at all." (Lightfoot.) It was an observance which celebrated the praise of God, who had given their fathers in the wilderness water out of the rock. But on the last day of the feast the people forsook the booths in which they lived during the preceding seven days, and celebrated the end of the wanderings in the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan—"a land of springs of water." Wherefore on that day the rite of drawing water from Siloam in the golden pitcher ceased. Jesus availed himself of that moment to utter this gracious invitation to the thirsty souls who might be in the throngs about him. While contentious critics conspired against him, there were others at the feast who stood by, looking with sad pity on the hilarious multitude and wondering when would be fulfilled the prophetic words: "A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord." (Joel iii. 18.) A barren ceremony



yielded no satisfaction to their thirsty souls; they were famishing for the water of life of which the priestly rite was but a symbol. Turning away from his querulous enemies, Jesus spoke to these serious souls the tender words in which the spiritual water was promised. He offered himself to them as the perfect satisfaction of the deepest cravings of the heart. Moreover, he promised that the recipients of such spiritual refreshment should become dispensers of it also. In the Old Dispensation spiritual influence was communicated to prophetic men, and through them it was imparted to others. Hence the word of the Lord to Moses: "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and *will put it upon them.*" (Num. xi. 17.) And also Elisha asked that an eldest son's portion of the *spirit of Elijah* might be given to him. This promise of the Lord meant, therefore, that in the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit every Christian soul should become in its own measure a prophetic soul, drawing living water from Christ and conveying the life-giving element to others.

What self-assertion in Jesus was here manifest against all the contradiction of sinners! What defiance of the rulers and what tender-

ness for thirsty souls mingled and flowed through the words which he said on the last and great day of the feast! Could he speak so if he were not divine? Who but a God could make such an invitation? Who but one who is divine would dare utter any of the precious promises of Jesus? What mere man could say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"? (Matt. xi. 28.) Jesus shows the heart of a God as well as wisdom and power divine.

4. *The divinest revelation cannot remove the doubts of some persons, and no evidence of the divinity of Christ is sufficient to make all men believers.* "Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him." (John vii. 40-43.) All had the same facts before them, but they reached diverse conclusions. Christ's appearance among men reveals them as truly as it reveals him. Men judge themselves when they accept or reject his

claims upon them. Hence he divides men into two classes in this world—believers and unbelievers. And in the world to come he will again divide them "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from his goats." (Matt. xxv. 32.) Then as now the record will be: "There was a division of the people because of him." The lines of cleavage in time will be extended into eternity.

5. *In the secret souls of men who dispute Christ's claims there is an awe of him which restrains them.* "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him." "They feared the people." (Luke xxii. 2; Mark xiv. 2; Matt. xxvi. 5.) And they also stood awed into silence before him who spoke words of such unearthly power.

In every age his enemies have been impressed thus by him. Many skeptics to-day fear the people too much to attack him with violence, but much more are they restrained by a mysterious quality in him which fills them with a mixed emotion of reverence and foreboding fear. "What," question they with themselves, "if he should turn out to be the God whom he claimed to be?" What, indeed, if he should?

XVIII.

“NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.”

JOHN VII. 45-53; VIII. 1.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

53 And every man went unto his own house.

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

## XVIII.

### “NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.”

WHILE Jesus was uttering the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth at the Feast of Tabernacles, there were hovering around the temple courts the emissaries of the Jewish Sanhedrin who had been sent to arrest him. These agents of the hostile Jewish rulers could not fail to hear some of the divine words which he spoke, nor to observe the powerful effect of his speech upon the multitudes. They heard him when he “cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink”; and between these words of his extraordinary self-assertion and the majesty of his person they felt there was no discrepancy. And they heard also what the people said of him, some saying, “Of a truth this is the Prophet,” and others, “This is the Christ.” As they listened, a spell fell upon them which paralyzed their purpose to arrest him. As it were, he disarmed them, and they went back without him to the “chief priests and Pharisees,” by whom they had been sent to apprehend him. They had been baffled

by his words and foiled by the interest of the people in him. What could they do but return without him? The angry Sanhedrinists, to whom they reported, demanded of them, "Why have ye not brought him?" and their candid answer was: "Never man spake like this man." Thus in seeking to arrest Jesus his enemies elicited a remarkable testimony from some of their own party to the superhuman character of his words.

1. "*Never man spake like this man.*" So said the awed officers of old, and so men continue to say. The word is true. No mere man is equal to the task of thinking out the teachings of Jesus. His miraculous deeds exhibit divine power, and not less do his marvelous words manifest the mind of God. From time to time rationalists arise who affirm that the uncultured writers of the primitive Church invented the character of Jesus and imagined the words which they put upon the lips of the fictitious character which they created. The theory is incredible. Let whoever may have been the authors of the four Gospels, there was not a man in the first century, nor in any other century, who could have thought out the teachings of Jesus; certainly not any one of the apostles.

“For such thinking they lacked all things that history and philosophy show to be necessary for such thinking. Why could not Socrates and Plato, great, learned, wise, and good, to whom came more than glimpses of heavenly truths, think out what the Sermon on the Mount contains? Socrates and Plato, if mere men could do such thinking, ought to have thought out the Sermon on the Mount; for they had every gift that nature could bestow and every opportunity cultured Athens could offer. And they did their best to think out the truths that bind man and God together. They failed; and Plato sighed for the coming of a divine man who would make clear what to him was dark.” (Haygood.) Nevertheless, we are asked to believe that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, or some unknown men like them, thought out the words of Jesus! It is incredible. The learned and confident theorizers who ask us to believe such an unthinkable thing cannot, with all their academic advantages and professed learning, write so much as one of “the parables of the kingdom.” Let any one of them, or all of them combined, show us what they can do in the way of producing a parable that could be esteemed as a parallel to the par-



able of the prodigal son. They will not attempt it.

2. *Though “never man spake like this man,” not many of “the mighty” obey his teachings.* “Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.” It is to be noted that the Pharisees, not the Sadducees, said these words. They proudly assumed to possess and protect orthodoxy. They had said that Jesus was a “deceiver,” and their question now was designed to suggest that no person of intelligence and position would believe on him; that only men of “the vulgar herd,” persons from the ignorant rabble, could be found among his followers. The Pharisaic mind, then and now, despises “the common people” and the religion of the common people. Wherefore St. Paul, who knew the Pharisees well by long association with them before his conversion, said: “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” (1 Cor. i. 26.) This is true, not because the religion of Christ is a base and superstitious thing, but because men entangled in worldly positions and enamored of worldly

honors feel that they cannot afford to be and do what Christ demands of them; they are not willing to pay the price of being whole-hearted Christians. In the case of the wavering, struggling Nicodemus we see something of the bondage in which such men live.

3. *Opposition to Him who spake as never man spake springs from the prejudices of selfishness and the animosity of Godless ambition, and it is both lawless and unreasonable.* "Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." A moment before they expressed contempt for the common people for knowing not the law, and cursed them for their ignorance; but when Nicodemus, a man who was learned in the law, directed their attention to a primary principle of it (Ex. xxiii. 1; Deut. i. 16, 17, xviii. 19-23, xix. 15-21), they turned upon him with equal anger and contempt because he did know it. They answered him with a sneer, being unable to reply to him with reason; they asked him, "Art thou also of Galilee?" by which they meant to

touch his pride. It was as if they had said: "Are you a country gawk from Galilee? We had thought better of you." It is the way of pride to deride the truth which it overrides, and to despise the law which it has resolved to disregard. With men of such minds it is idle to argue; for that which is not founded in reason cannot be removed by reason. It does not discredit Jesus that the Pharisees rejected him; it is a testimony to his power that he won from among them a few such men as Nicodemus and Paul. Others were convinced by him who were never converted. "Among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John xii. 42, 43.) The strength of Christ is manifested in the obstinate sins in human hearts which he has cast out and the mighty men whom his grace has conquered. He must have made a profound impression on Nicodemus, or no such words would have been uttered by the "man of the Pharisees" (John iii. 1) on this occasion. So deep was the impression made on his mind and heart that the dishonors of the crucifixion were not enough

to dislodge his conviction that Jesus was indeed the Christ. We read: "Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Jesus shows himself mighty to save by the mighty men he saves. To his cradle came wise men from afar, and laid at his feet royal gifts of "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh," and to his tomb brave men of learning brought myrrh and aloes and spices. Neither the poverty of his human infancy nor the dishonor of his cruel crucifixion was sufficient to dim his divine glory to the eyes of men of faith.

But men of determined unbelief contradicted history to find a reason to reject him. They said: "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, was from Galilee, as was also Jonah (2 Kings xiv. 25),

not to mention others. When one obstinately refuses to accept Christ, he loses no time in manufacturing false reasons to justify his course.

Nathanael met the same difficulty about Christ's Galilean origin when Philip said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"; but Nathanael was a man of sincere and guileless nature, and without hesitation accepted Philip's invitation: "Come and see." By coming to the Saviour and dealing with him directly and honestly all his doubts and difficulties were removed, and he exclaimed: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." (John i. 45-49.) But these men were guileful; they were not open to conviction. They did not approach Jesus with the open mind which Nathanael brought to the Master. They were not seeking to know the truth, but they were looking eagerly for reasons to justify their opposition to Christ. They found what they sought. They were guilty of willful unbelief; they loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. Their creed was a secretion of depraved wills, not the outcome of

unbiased reason; it was born of their conduct. Their doubts were the fruit of their deeds. The minds of men are misled oftener by misconduct than by misunderstanding. Such was the case of these Jewish leaders.

4. *While speaking as never man spake, Jesus used not his miraculous wisdom and power for his own advantage but manifested the unselfishness of God.* “And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.” The meeting of the rulers broke up in confusion when they saw that some of their own number were impressed by him; and “every man went unto his own house,” but no man, not even Nicodemus, offered him the hospitality of his home. Alone “Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives,” and slept unsheltered beneath the stars, unless he was received into the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, which was just over the mountain from Jerusalem. To one of the scribes Jesus had said on another occasion: “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Mayhap the same scribe now saw him demonstrating the truth of the sad words as alone he wended his way to the Mount of Olives at nightfall.

The way one uses the power he possesses reveals his true character. Jesus had all power, but he never put forth any of it in the service of himself. He could multiply loaves and fishes to feed the hungry thousands, but he refused to make one morsel of bread for himself when he hungered in the desert. None but the unselfish God would use infinite power in that divine way. He who could speak as never man spake went silently as a homeless man to the Mount of Olives!

**XIX.**

**JESUS NOT A JUDGE, BUT A SAVIOUR**



JOHN VIII. 2-11.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

## XIX.

### JESUS NOT A JUDGE, BUT A SAVIOUR.

THIS story of the woman taken in adultery is not regarded by most competent scholars as a part of the original copy of the Fourth Gospel as written by St. John. While it is found in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, it is not contained in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, nor in the *Codex Vaticanus*, nor in several of the most ancient versions of this Gospel. It appears, however, in most of the later Uncials, and in at least three hundred cursive manuscripts. It was accepted by Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose; and some modern critical scholars affirm its genuineness. But without entering into the critical questions concerning it, we may safely accept it as true history and a story of apostolic origin. It bears the marks of a truthful narrative on its face in that it shows the chief actors carrying themselves in a way true to their natures. It shows the scribes and Pharisees maintaining the same attitude to Jesus which is disclosed in this Gospel and in the Synoptic Gospels whenever they appear in the evangelic records. It reveals

Jesus also maintaining his characteristic position upon the issues in which they sought repeatedly to entangle him.

On a former occasion "certain of the Pharisees and the Herodians" were sent to him in an effort to "catch him in his words" about the lawfulness of paying "tribute to Cæsar." (Matt xxii. 15-23; Mark xii. 13-17; Luke xx. 20-26.) They thought to entrap him in a dilemma from which he could not escape. If he answered by saying tribute ought to be paid to Cæsar, he would provoke the hostility of the people who hated the despicable Roman taxes; on the other hand, if he opposed the paying of tribute, they could hail him before "the governor" (Luke xx. 20) for exciting resistance to civil authority. "But he perceived their craftiness," and answered them so wisely that "they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marveled at his answer, and held their peace." (Luke xx. 26.) On this occasion they sought to ensnare him with a somewhat similar device. They brought before him a woman taken in the very act of adultery, about whose guilt there could be no question. For such a crime the Mosaic law prescribed the penalty of stoning. (Deut.

xxii. 23, 24; Lev. xx. 10.) If he should say the woman in the case should not be stoned, they could denounce him to the Jewish people as one who looked with allowance on unchastity and favored the breaking of the law of Moses. If he should approve the stoning, they could accuse him to the Roman authorities as one who assumed to sentence criminals to capital punishment, a prerogative which at that time was rigorously and exclusively reserved to the civil rulers. But again he discerned their sinister purpose, and sent them from his presence in confusion even greater than the humiliation in which they went away from their questioning of him about paying tribute to Cæsar. The main lesson taught by both incidents is the truth contained in Christ's words to Pilate when he said: "My kingdom is not of this world." (John xviii. 36.)

1. *To what base methods does hostility to Christ lead men to descend!* "And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken

in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him." While he had been sleeping on the Mount of Olives under the stars, that he might have strength as a good Shepherd to teach the unfed, shepherdless people assembled in Jerusalem, the Jewish officials had been sneaking around disreputable quarters and playing the part of "Peeping Toms" in order to find a case of repulsive crime with which they might put him to confusion. They broke in upon the listening company which he was teaching and interrupted his gracious instructions, dragging with them a poor, disgraced woman, sobbing in her shame and guilt; and all for the accomplishment of no better object than that of involving the great Teacher in an inextricable position. They took the woman in an act of licentious infidelity to her husband, and we take them in an act of loathsome infidelity to the God for whom they professed the most ardent attachment. She was in shame and tears, while they bawled out their brazen jeers in pretended zeal for the Mosaic law! There was more hope for such a sinner as she than for such men as they. No

wonder Jesus said to them: “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.” (Matt. xxi. 31.) Why did not these cowardly libertines bring, along with the sinful woman, the vile man whom also they took in the act of licentiousness? Had they procured a scoundrel to bring to pass the criminal act which they desired to lay before Jesus? Did they bribe for their purpose a purulent pimp as they bribed later the Roman soldiers to speak falsely concerning the body of the risen Lord by saying, “His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept”? (Matt. xxviii. 13.) Who knows? Men who oppose the Christ care nothing for purity or truth or justice.

2. *Love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”* (1 Cor. xiii. 6.) “But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” Divine love was grieved that sin so gross could fill with pleasure the minds of even the rulers of Israel. Divine chastity blushed and, embarrassed by the situation, looked away from the wretched woman and her shameless accusers. “Few positions could be more painful to a pure-minded man than that in which

our Lord was placed." These rulers might gloat over such a case, but the pure face of Jesus was flushed with affronted modesty and godly grief as he looked upon it. The Lord is no more pleased now when novelists and playwrights draw such characters before the public gaze, professing that they realistically expose such indecency in order to make it hateful to those who look upon its exhibition. He knows, as do they, the prurient demand it is meant to serve and the motives of greed which eagerly supply what the impure demand. To a Christly mind such scenes are repulsive. That man is lost to virtue and to shame who can use human sin as these Pharisees employed the act of this woman; and they also are not less fallen who can employ exhibitions of impurity on the stage and on the printed page for ends of amusement. "When such things are thrust upon us, either in literature or elsewhere, we have always the resource of our Lord; we can turn away as though we heard not; we can refuse to inquire further into such matters, and turn away our eyes from them." (Marcus Dods.) And this we will do if we have not become so base that we can find pleasure in poring over scenes of iniquity.

3. *Persistent evil falls into the pits which it digs for the feet of the innocent.* "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted of their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, the woman standing in the midst." When, at their first question, he stooped down and wrote on the ground, they foolishly thought he was at a loss for an answer, and that their plot was successful. But when, at their unblushing persistency in questioning him about such a case, he arose and gave them his convicting answer in the presence of all the people, they were put to utter confusion. Men who drag into public the secret sins of others in order to accomplish sinister ends are generally in private life guilty of worse sins than those they denounce openly. Hence conscience made cowards of these corrupt men. The consciences of all men are on the side of Christ, and at his word their dormant moral convictions may break forth in accusing voices that cannot be hushed. Jesus



knew what was in men (John ii. 24), and needed not to be told that these men had sins of their own which they dared not face. He had dined with Simon, one of the Pharisees, on a former occasion (Luke vii. 36-50), when "a woman of the city," who was a "sinner," washed his feet with her tears and anointed them with precious ointment. On that occasion the Pharisee "spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." (Luke vii. 39.) If Simon was among his fellow Pharisees on this occasion, as he may have been, he surely found that Jesus knew what manner of man he was. Simon knew too well for his credit who the sinful woman was when she anointed the Saviour; and it may be that the incident in his dining room suggested the trick which he and his party tried to play in the temple court on this occasion. If so, he found that in trying to ensnare Divine Mercy he was caught in the grasp of Omniscient Truth. It is no wonder that he and all the rest of the Pharisees, "being convicted by their own conscience," fled before the penetrating gaze of Incarnate Truth, leaving Jesus "alone, and the woman standing in

the midst" of the wondering multitude who witnessed the discomfiture of the artful foes of the great Teacher.

4. *Jesus refuses to be made an earthly judge, and stands before men as a heavenly Saviour.* "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." By thus dealing with the accused woman the Master did not mean to condone her sin, nor to treat it as a light matter. He did not pass upon her guilt at all. He simply declined to be made the judge in a criminal court. He could no more consent to be made a judge than to be made a king. This criminal case, which was brought before him, has its parallel in a civil suit with which he was asked to interfere, when a covetous man interrupted his teaching and "said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke xii. 13, 14.) He did not justify the grasping selfishness and injustice of an unloving brother, but he declined to arbitrate

the dispute. In like manner he declined to judge the woman, but he did not forget to exhort her to repent for her past sin and renounce all sin for the future: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Our Lord proposes to be the Saviour of men, and he will not be anything else. Wherefore he saith: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." These wicked Pharisees sought the sinful woman that she might be condemned; but "the Son of man came *to seek* and *to save* that which was lost."  
(Luke xix. 10.)

**XX.**

**“THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”**

JOHN VIII. 12-30.

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

## XX.

### “THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

IF the account of the woman taken in adultery be omitted from the Gospel of John, this passage now under consideration will follow immediately after the last paragraph in chapter vii., in which is recorded the return of the officers sent to arrest Jesus, and their report to the Sanhedrin that they had come back without him, because “never man spake like this man.” The attempt to arrest him having failed, Jesus began again to declare himself to the people. In the preceding chapter (vii.) we learn that Jesus, taking occasion from the pouring out of the libations from Siloam during the Feast of Tabernacles, offered himself as the Water of Life, saying: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” In the passage now before us he shows himself as the Light of the World, taking occasion from another custom of the feast to proclaim this transcendent truth. On the evening of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles large candelabra were lighted in the Court of the Women which flung their light

over the whole city and symbolized the pillar of fire in the wilderness. Authorities differ as to whether this illumination was repeated daily during the feast, but all are agreed that it did not take place on the last evening. The feast commemorated the forty years' wandering of the Exodus, and celebrated the miraculous care of the nation by God during that period of its history. The last day, answering to the entrance into Canaan when the water of the desert ceased to be needed and the guiding pillar of cloud and fire disappeared, was the day on which no water from Siloam was poured out from the golden pitcher by the officiating priest and the lights were not kindled in the Court of the Women. As Jesus stood in "the treasury" (verse 20)—*i. e.*, near the thirteen brazen chests which stood in the Court of the Women and into which the people put their offerings—while the multitude were missing the festal light of the great lamps which had ceased to burn, he declared: "I am the light of the world." In all his words spoken publicly at this feast he evidently intended to declare himself as the God who guided and guarded Israel in the wilderness. When he said, "I am the light of the world," he declared that and more;

he affirmed that he was to all mankind what the pillar of fire had been to the Hebrews during their life in the desert. Such self-assertion was startling to the men who heard him, and they understood perfectly that he meant to make the tremendous claim which his words imply. Indeed, no fair mind can fail to discern that Jesus intended to claim for himself divine nature and authority in the utterances made by him during this period of his life as they are recorded in the Gospel of John. He puts forward his superhuman preëminence in a variety of forms that none may mistake his meaning. He calls himself "the Bread of Life" (John vi. 51), "the Water of Life" (John vii. 37), "the Light of the World" (John viii. 12), "the Door of the Fold" (John x. 7, 9), "the Good Shepherd" (John x. 11, 14), "the Resurrection and the Life" (John xi. 25), "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John xiv. 6), and "the True Vine" (John xv. 1).

Men may call him an impostor or a madman; but in view of these amazing utterances they cannot call him a wise man or a good man without acknowledging that he is also the God-man. The Jewish rulers who denounced him as an impostor were far more logical than



the modern Unitarians and rationalists who deny that his words require belief in his divinity. We cannot so trifle with words. We must accept him as God or reject him altogether; we must adore him or stone him. "He called himself the Son of God: who among mortals dare say he was not?"

1. *Jesus is the Light of the World.* "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." God's guidance of his people is by a Person, not by a program. He gave to Abraham no blue print of the pilgrimage to which he called him, nor map of the land which he promised him. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, *unto a land that I will show thee.*" (Gen. xii. 1.) The descendants of Abraham, journeying from Egypt and Canaan, did not go by a well-made highway, directed by sign-posts; but they went under *the personal guidance of Jehovah*, whose presence shone forth from the pillar of cloud and fire by which they were guided. Similarly the Christian life is a personally conducted journey. We are not led by a chart, but by Christ. We are to fol-

low him, and follow him "daily" (Luke ix. 23). We cannot tell what the future holds for us; we take even our food as "*daily* bread" direct from the hand of our Guide, knowing full well that, although we cannot see "the distant scene," he will lead us wisely and safely until "the night has passed" and the morning breaks upon us at home in the city of our God. He is no transient, flickering light that shines on only one stretch of the way; but he will lead us all the way—he is "the light of life"—a light from his life for our life.

2. *The nature of Christ being divine, human witnesses cannot attest its origin and quality.* "The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness

of me.” The carping Pharisees recurred to and perverted what he had said to them before: “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.” (John v. 31.) The connection in which he had made the declaration shows clearly that it means: “If my claims are attested by my testimony *alone*, they are false.” Hence when they say, “Thou bearest record of thyself; the record is not true,” he appeals again to his Father’s attestation of him, as he had done when he uttered the very words which they were now distorting. (John v. 32-41.)

In the nature of the subject, the being and perfections of God are beyond the knowledge of men. Men are forced to judge under the limitations of the flesh. Hence these men could not tell whence the divine Christ came or whither he went. As a mere man he would not judge himself, but as the Son of God he knew whence he came and whither he went. In his own bosom he carried the unmistakable testimony of the Father attesting his Sonship. By outward tokens also, in miraculous signs and supernatural scriptures, the Father had borne witness to him. If by the law of Moses the testimony of *two men* was enough to establish

a fact, how much more conclusive must be the witness of *two divine persons* (verses 17 and 18)! Without superhuman testimony men can never attain to the knowledge of God. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 11.)

To the stupid interruption of Jesus by these captious Pharisees we owe his wonderful answer in which we catch a glimpse of the great truth of trinitarian theology, that without the interrelations of the Triune God the knowledge of God is impossible. Into their desperate darkness this beam of heavenly truth he threw; it dazed them, but it illumines men of faith with "the light of life."

3. *Men must know God the Father through his revelation in the divine Son, or they cannot know God at all.* "Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." Although it was uttered in a vastly different spirit, their question was the same in substance as the request of Philip when he said: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth

us.” (John xiv. 8.) And the answer of Jesus to this question was in different terms, the same he gave to Philip when he replied: “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; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” (John xiv. 9.)

The “heavenly places,” where “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blesses us with all spiritual blessings” (Eph. i. 3), are not the bare, bleak heights of a frigid, speculative Unitarianism, but “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John i. 3.)

4. *The majesty of the Son of God may awe men who will not accept him.* “These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.” “The treasury” was the brazen chests in the Court of the Women, and the Hall Gazith, where the Sanhedrin met, was close to the Court of the Women. The point the evangelist seems to be making in the statements of this verse is that Jesus boldly proclaimed the startling things he had been saying in the most public manner, at a most frequented place in the temple, close to

the headquarters of his enemies, and yet "no man laid hands on him." He adds the words, "*for his hour was not yet come,*" to explain why no hand was laid on him. St. John repeats in his Gospel more than once this and similar statements about "his hour." He records the fact that Jesus said to his mother at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, "Woman, . . . *mine hour is not yet come*" (John ii. 4), and again to his brethren, "*My time is not yet come.*" He tells us in the seventh chapter that when the rage of our Lord's enemies rose to a white heat, "then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because *his hour was not yet come.*" (John vii. 30.) Now again he repeats the statement here in recording similar circumstances on this occasion. The apostle seems to suggest that among the running hours of time there was one which was pre-eminently the Lord's hour, and that to that hour he moved most deliberately, neither quickening nor slacking his pace to keep step with the motions of men. To it he moved like planets, far beyond the plane of earth, travel sublimely along their divinely ordered orbits. Thus majestically he moved toward his hour, and as he passed, irate foes stood helpless and para-

lyzed by the way. What was that hour? Let Jesus answer the question, as he does at a later moment when the cross came in sight: "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. . . . Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from *this hour*: but for this cause came I *unto this hour*." (John xii. 23-27.) *His hour* was the hour of his atoning death—the hour of both his humiliation and his glorification. He came to it freely; he was not dragged to it unwillingly. Hence he said: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x. 17, 18.) To his death he advanced under his Father's direction, unhastened by any suggestion of his mother or any advice of his brethren (John vii. 6); and undismayed by any menace of his enemies. (John vii. 30; viii. 20.)

The Father *gave* his Son to save the world; he was not snatched out of his Father's hands by angry foes. Jewish rulers could not overcome his power, but they could withstand his grace—and they did withstand it to their ruin.

5. *Rejection of "the Light of Life" leads men to endless death.* "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." He felt that his body was beyond their power to take as long as he willed; and that their souls, as long as they willed, were as far beyond his reach. Perhaps, therefore, the situation in which he stood suggested the form of his warning utterance. He was to go on his way to the cross, through the grave, and up to the highest heaven. Thither they could not follow him unless they believed. In the sentence translated, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," the



word "he" does not appear in the original. He said: "Unless ye believe that *I* am, ye shall die in your sins." Every Jew who heard him knew that he was thereby asserting his self-existence, even as Jehovah called himself "I AM" at the burning bush.

These men of earth-bound vision could not see how true were his words when he said: "I am from above." They refused to believe him, and they died in their sins.

6. *Who was Jesus? What said he of himself?* "Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father." Whatever else may be meant by this confessedly difficult passage, this is certainly true: that, by their direct question to Christ concerning his character, they elicited a reply which implied his coequality with the Father. It is a statement of Jesus concerning his own person; and with reference to it and all similar statements of his which are recorded in the Gospels, we may say

with Luthardt: "What is the mystery of his person? What does he say of himself? For this, after all, will always have to be the basis of our final decision concerning him. For so much confidence in any case we give him—be we never so distrustful in other respects—that he knew who he was, and did not speak differently from what he knew."

7. *The crucifixion of Jesus is the unveiling of his divine nature, and brings forth his glorification.* "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he [or, more correctly, "that I am"], and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." Such at last was the effect of the crucifixion, even as he said. The centurion, standing by the cross and hearing the dying cry of Jesus, said: "Truly this man was the Son of God." (Matt. xxvii. 54; Mark xv. 39.) A malefactor crucified by his side perceived his divine character, and said: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." (Luke xxiii. 42.) And Nicodemus came boldly from his secret discipleship into

open confession of him, and with Joseph of Arimathea gave him honorable burial, the crucifixion having broken down all his misgivings about him. (John xix. 39.) In the Acts of the Apostles we read that shortly after his ascension "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts vi. 7.) O the convincing power of the cross! Well may we unite with Paul in saying: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.)

8. *As the light of the sun is its own witness, so in the words of Jesus, who is the Light of the World, there is a self-evidencing power.* "As he spake these words many believed on him." He had done miracles before them without leading them to believe, but as he spoke of his unearthly nature and of his mysterious relation to the Father there fell upon them a spell like an enthralling influence from heaven, and they believed on him. In all ages his word has carried like power to open-hearted men. It is a significant sentence which St.

Luke uses in recording the conversion of Sergius Paulus of Cyprus when he says: "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, *being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.*" (Acts xiii. 12.) Striking as was the miracle wrought by Paul, "*the doctrine of the Lord*" was more astonishing than *the act of the apostle*. Christ's doctrine is truly astonishing. When the people heard his Sermon on the Mount, they "were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Matt. vii. 28, 29.)

Jesus still teaches the world with authority. He is "the Light of the World," and his beams fall upon a benighted race with authoritative radiance.

They fall on the moral nature with convincing power as sunbeams attest themselves to the eye. The truth as it is in Jesus needs not for its success among men so much arguments to defend it as fervent and faithful proclamation to those who know it not. Every man's conscience is an ally of the gospel of Christ. The messengers of heaven make a great mistake when they preach more *about* the gospel than they preach *of* the gospel. Christ's offer of salvation finds a readier access to the human

heart than any elaborately conceived "philosophy of the plan of salvation" finds entrance into the human mind. Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John vi. 63.) What the world needs is to hear his words. The most overwhelming apologetic for the gospel is the gospel itself. If the note of authority has grown feeble or utterly silent in any pulpits, it is because the preachers have been preaching something else than the gospel. Christ never uttered so much as one word of an apologetic character, but he spoke with a commanding power.

**XXI.**

**MEN MUST DEIFY HIM OR CRUCIFY HIM.**

JOHN VIII. 31-59.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

52 Then said the Jews unto him. Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, etc.

## XXI.

### MEN MUST DEIFY HIM OR CRUCIFY HIM.

CHRIST'S manifestation of himself at the Feast of Tabernacles stirred to its depths the Jewish nation, and excited the people at Jerusalem especially. He was discussed on all sides, and his claims for himself gave rise to a great variety of opinion. Repeatedly John shows that "there was a division among the people because of him." (John vii. 43, 50-52; x. 19.) Some of his most mysterious utterances carried with them such convincing power that "many believed on him" who had been at first among those who opposed him. (John vii. 30.) Some others "*believed him*" without "*believing on him*"—*i. e.*, they believed his words in which he claimed to be the promised Messiah, and they separated themselves from his enemies, and were ready to follow him as a worldly ruler. They were no longer willing to say that he was an impostor or madman, but they were not of the same class with the spiritual believers mentioned in verse 30.



The evangelist makes a distinction between the two classes which is not brought out in the Authorized Version; he describes those mentioned in verse 30 as those who “believed on him,” while he calls the persons mentioned in verse 31 “Jews who *believed him.*” The latter occupied a position about midway between his avowed enemies and his spiritual followers. They were willing to accept him as a national teacher and political deliverer, but they did not understand him as a spiritual Saviour. Jesus would have them go on to perfection, and he spoke the words found at the beginning of the passage under consideration in order to test their faith and, if possible, lead them to become his spiritual disciples. But they proved to be “stony ground” hearers—hearers “which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.” (Luke viii. 13.) When he tested them by his searching words, they turned against him as quickly as they had turned to him; and, in the end, they were ready to join with his fiercest enemies in stoning him. In the colloquy with them Jesus brings to view most important lessons concerning true and false discipleship.

1. *True discipleship requires one to do more*

*than assume an attitude of friendliness to Jesus and accept partially his teachings; it involves utter and absolute obedience to his word.* “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him [Greek “believed him”], If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.” The words of Jesus imply more than mere continued adherence to him as opposed to any wavering fickleness; they mean the following of his teaching to its uttermost consequences, obeying his words in every situation arising in daily life. These half-hearted believers were willing to accept Christ’s teaching in part; but when they knew what were its spiritual implications and requirements, it ceased to be acceptable to them. Jesus perceived their state of heart, and uttered these words to test them and, if possible, to lead them to deeper convictions. From being half-hearted followers he desired that in whole-heartedness they might go on to perfection. The essence of going on to perfection consists in following Christ’s teaching to its uttermost consequences. “Therefore leaving the principles [“the beginning”] of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.” (Heb. vi. 1.)

*2. True discipleship to Christ leads to light*

*and liberty.* “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth forever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” These Jews were conscious of political oppression by the Romans, and they desired a Messiah who would bring them political deliverance. But they indignantly resented the suggestion of any personal servitude “to any man.” Nevertheless, their pride of race, which flamed up so quickly and burned so ardently, showed that they were victims of the worst sort of slavery—spiritual slavery, of which they were both enamored and unconscious. Their angry reply to Jesus shows how strongly this bondage of sin was fixed upon their souls. It shut them up in mental imprisonment so that they could not perceive spiritual truth, and it carried them away captives from the true commonwealth of Israel, over which the Divine Sovereign reigned, and sold them into slavery to a malign and

degrading spirit of evil. They might for a time be attached outwardly as "servants" to the Abrahamic household, but in the end they could not abide in it and enjoy the rights and blessings of legitimate "sons"; they were only temporary and external members of the house, as were all slaves in those days. And unless they became sons by the supernatural birth secured through the Son, they could not be "free indeed." Only men who fully receive the only-begotten Son of the Father can ever enjoy the light and liberty of permanent members of the household of faith. This entire passage illustrates a paragraph in the first chapter of the Gospel: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood [*i. e.*, not of mere Abrahamic descent], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 11-13.) Parallel passages in the Pauline writings which teach the same great truth that Jesus sought to impress upon these half-hearted believers are, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me *free* from the law of sin and

death" (Rom. viii. 2) and "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there *is liberty*" (Cor. iii. 17).

With amazing blundering some men have perverted the words, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In these words Jesus taught the Jews that absolute submission to him in unquestioning discipleship would lead them into deeper apprehension of spiritual truth and to complete possession of spiritual freedom. But some proud advocates of what is falsely called "free thought" pervert the words to mean that spiritual freedom is won by rejection of all authority, human and divine, and guiding life by the loose and changeful notions of the carnal reason. Such a process leads not to liberty, but to spiritual bondage, in which unconscious slaves strut with self-opinionated pride, to a bondage very like the boastful servitude of the Jews who rejected Jesus on this occasion.

3. *True discipleship is essentially the same in all generations, and the spiritual freemen of all ages submit to the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son.* "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father:

and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham." The purport of the words, "*this did not Abraham,*" is that Abraham obeyed the Christ-spirit in his life, centuries before the Messiah appeared in the flesh. It is a kindred thought to the idea in the words which Jesus spoke a few minutes later: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Similarly the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews represents Moses when he made the decisive choice of his life, by which his whole career was determined, as "*esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*" (Heb. xi. 26); and the same writer includes in the one muster roll of heroes the men of faith in all generations, from Abel downward. The whole family of God, "in heaven and earth," bears the patronymic of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. iii. 14, 15). Wherefore the multitudes of the sons of faith coming "from the east, and the west, and

the north, and the south" shall "sit down in the kingdom of God" with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets. (Luke xiii. 28-30.)

Opposition to Christ is alienation from the good of all ages; malice toward him is the murder of one's own soul.

4. *The forces of moral evil in the universe are sharply arrayed against each other, and he who is not a disciple of Christ is estranged from God and allied with the devil.* "Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it."

These Jews were proud of their descent from Abraham and of their inheritance in the spiritual commonwealth of which he was the patriarch; and when Jesus said they did "the

deeds of their father," they instantly inferred that they had fallen away from the religion of Abraham into idolatry, which, according to the Jewish way of thinking and speaking, was spiritual fornication. (Jer. ii. 1-20; Hos. i. 2 and ii. 4; Isa. i. 21.) Hence they replied warmly: "We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." They resented the suggestion that they had more than one spiritual Father, a pretended father of goodness and a real father of evil; they repudiated the idea that they had fallen into the ranks of idolaters and were arrayed against the God of Abraham, their Father and his Father. But Jesus pressed home upon them the truth that there are only two spiritual parties in the world; that all men are ranged under the authority of God or the rule of Satan, and that in resisting him they had become allies of the Satanic forces. This is the same truth which he emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount when he said: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The words imply that there are only two spiritual masters possible to men, God and



Satan; and that every man is serving one of these and fighting the other. The moral faculties are never tepid in their attachments, nor neutral in their attitude; they take sides, and act with the ardent energies of the highly heated passions of love and hate. They who "*love* the Lord, *hate* evil." Moreover, the moral nature of mankind takes hold of spiritual persons; and the moral conduct of men is influenced more by invisible spirits of evil than by their earthly ancestry or worldly environment. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph. vi. 12, Revised Version.) The chief foes of goodness among men are supra-mundane. Jesus told these truth-hating and murder-loving Jews that they were inspired by the devil, the father of lies and the originator of murder. Who will dare say they were not? He saw the inner movements of their hearts and discerned the invisible forces operating upon them and through them. And he sees all hearts to-day, and discerns that every man is his disciple or a follower of Satan. Wherefore he saith: "He that is not with me is

against me." The earth is the seat of war in the moral universe; and every man is fighting for God and Christ and the kingdom of heaven, or for Satan and the kingdom of darkness. No soul can declare its neutrality in the war that is thus waged.

5. *There is a dialect of the kingdom of heaven which only the disciples of Jesus understand.* "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. . . . And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

When Jesus said, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" he used for "speech" a word which carries with it the idea of a dialect; it is the word used in Matthew xxvi. 73 when some said to Peter: "Thy *speech* bewrayeth thee." So also in saying, "He that is of God heareth God's words," he employs a term for "words" of a somewhat similar import. The whole idea of the passage is that there is a spiritual idiom which they who are strangers to God neither understand nor speak. The false

forces which follow Satan, the liar and murderer, cannot understand the words of truth and love and life which characterize the dialect of the army of God. In speaking thus he declared that these Jews were aliens from the kingdom of heaven, foreigners who could not so much as understand its tongue. Hence the form of their bitter retort: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?"

6. *Men who refuse to be disciples of Jesus Christ the Son walk in darkness and reject the light of God the Father.* "Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth." He had told them that they were strangers to God and foreigners to the kingdom of heaven, who did not know even the language of the spiritual commonwealth; and this seemed to them so preposterous that they retorted by calling him a foreigner—"a Samaritan"—and charging, moreover, that he was a frenzied foreigner, a devil-possessed madman. Christ's judgment of the world always seems madness to men of the world. They walk in

darkness until light becomes intolerable to their eyes. Far from being able to discern him as the Son of God, they take him for a child of the devil; they think that he is committing the sin of blasphemy against God when he is manifesting the glory and honor of the Father. In line with the thought of Jesus at this point is St. Paul's statement: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) It is a notable and instructive fact, full of solemn warning, that on every occasion when Jesus made the highest disclosure of his divine nature he was denounced by the Jews as a demoniac. (Matt. xii. 24-28; Mark iii. 22; Luke xi. 15-19; John vii. 20 and x. 20.) When the devil is the god of men, they must inevitably make of God a devil. And "if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. x. 25.) The men who said Jesus was a demoniac said also that John the Baptist had a devil. (Luke vii. 33.) Festus called Paul a madman. (Acts xxvi. 24.) The spiritual world appears like a mad world to

the children of darkness. It must be so. How could it be otherwise? It reverses all their standards of judgment, and its agents seem, therefore, to turn the world upside down.

*7. Discipleship to Jesus frees men from death, as it also delivers them from the bondage of sin.* “Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?”

Jesus made himself nothing less than the Prince of Life when he declared that discipleship to him meant deathlessness. Abraham and the prophets were all living in him; for “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Matt. xxii. 32.) These carnally minded Jews neither discerned him as the Life-Giver nor understood the spiritual life which he proposes to give to faithful disciples who keep his quickening words.

*8. Jesus is able to create a discipleship of spiritual life, because he is one with the self-*

*existent God.* “Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

When Jesus claimed that he could give to his disciples spiritual, deathless life, he could not justify the claim with anything less than the assertion that through him came to men the knowledge of God which is eternal life; for “this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent.” (John xvii. 3.) And no one can reveal the self-existent and eternal God and cause men to know him truly except One who is himself self-existent and eternal. Wherefore he declared now, in connection with his life-giving power, his unique relation to the Father, and affirmed his eternal preëxistence: “Be-

fore Abraham was, I am.” He does not say “Before Abraham was, I was created, or I was made.” He adopts a form of speech that asserts unequivocally self-existence; it carries us back to where God in speaking to Moses called himself “I AM” (Ex. iii. 14), and to the revelation to St. John on Patmos, in which he is called “Him which *is*, and which *was*, and which *is to come*” (Rev. i. 4).

It is an axiom of both science and religion that “life comes from life only”; the inanimate can never give rise to the animate. And if one is to have an eternal life in the future, it must be derived from a source of life which has been always. Spiritual life must, therefore, spring from an eternal Saviour. Only a transcendent Redeemer can impart such a transcendent type of life. Wherefore he saith to his disciples, “Because *I live, ye shall live* also” (John xiv. 19), and St. Paul affirms of the Christian life that it is “life hid with Christ in God” (Col. iii. 3).

9. *The claims of Christ are so great that men must become his faithful followers or his fierce foes; and half-hearted believers who refuse to go on to perfection soon fall into positive opposition to him.* “Then took they up stones to

cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them.”

These Jews did not mistake his meaning, nor did he claim that they misunderstood him. They mistook his nature and his words when, with their imperfect faith, they were ready to accept him as a worldly deliverer; and when he perceived that they thus misunderstood him, he proceeded to correct their error by a fuller and more lofty revelation of his nature and mission. But now when they were fully informed, and when in the face of the transcendent truths which he had proclaimed to them, they took up stones to cast at him, he did not seek to stay their violence by further explanation. He had nothing more to say, because he had made them understand what he claimed for himself. If now he did not mean to claim that he was divine, just as they evidently understood him to mean, he dealt with them uncandidly and insincerely, and incurred needless persecution. If he meant to be understood as he was understood, he claimed to be God, and is an impostor if the claim is unfounded.

There is no middle ground. Men must be



followers or foes of Christ. They must and will deify him or crucify him. The moral faculties cannot face him without falling in adoration at his feet or taking up stones to cast at him.

It is a remarkable fact that the meek and lowly Jesus never met a low estimate of himself that he did not seek to raise it higher; and there is no record of an instance of his trying to reduce the highest possible estimate of himself to lower terms. He would escape and hide himself from the violence of the passions of men who sought to discrown and destroy him, but he never once turned away from the passionate adoration of those who would worship him. He must have been the Eternal Son of God or the most blasphemous impostor that has ever appeared among men.

XXII.

WORKING THE WORKS OF GOD.

17

JOHN IX. 1-41.

1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, etc.

## XXII.

### WORKING THE WORKS OF GOD.

THE great truths which this chapter exemplifies will be most clearly seen if we consider it from four points of view: (1) From the attitude of Jesus in the transaction; (2) from the attitude of the man whose eyes were opened; (3) from the attitude of his neighbors and parents; (4) and from the attitude of the Pharisees.

1. *The attitude of Jesus—an attitude of courageous compassion.*

(a) *His perfect love cast out fear.* Reference to the last verses of the preceding chapter shows that the hostility of the Jews at Jerusalem reached at this time such a pitch of fierceness that they took up stones to cast at him; “but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” The chapter which we are studying follows immediately with these words, “And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth,” etc. No peril to himself was sufficient to make him overlook this

pitiabie case of need. Like the "good Samaritan," whom he commended in his parable (Luke x. 25-37) because he risked his own life and gave generously of his own resources for the relief of the man who had fallen among thieves on the Jericho road, he incurred personal danger to himself by stopping to bless with the gift of sight this poor, blind beggar while the den of thieves in his Father's house held stones in their hands to kill him. Perfect love casts out selfishness; for fear is the child of selfishness.

(b) *In the presence of such a case of need Jesus was also indifferent to the idle speculations of his disciples concerning the origin of the man's blindness.* Love is concerned to provide a remedy for evil rather than to discover its origin and apportion blame for its existence.

(c) *He saw in this case of suffering the hand of divine mercy, disguised, but working toward vision for the soul as well as sight for the eyes.* He instantly undertook to coöperate with the providential purpose and carry it to its blessed consummation. Such always is the spirit of a true child of God; he is more concerned to be a laborer together with God than to solve all the mysterious ways in which God moves, "his wonders to perform."

(d) *He felt himself under a heavenly compulsion to coöperate with the providential purpose of the Father and do his part in working them out.* "I must work the works of him that sent me." Here is no constraint of fatalism, but the compulsion of love. Because he was "sent," he felt that he "must" work.

(e) *He perceived that such work admitted of neither haste nor delay.* His threatening enemies, with stones in their hands, could not hurry him past his duty, and yet he said: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." He, the timeless One, had no time to waste.

(f) *He adapted his method to the peculiarities of the case before him in order that faith might be quickened and carried to perfection.* He saw the needs of the blind man's soul as clearly as he discerned the blindness of his eyes, and he suited his methods to meet those needs. He never deals with any two souls in the same way, but he always uses the best way for each and for all.

(g) *He ceased not his care for the man until his faith reached the point at which he exclaimed in worshipful adoration: "Lord, I be-*

*lieve.*" The Jews cast the man out on account of his rising faith in Jesus; the Master sought him out for the same reason, and brought his faith to a saving trust.

2. *The attitude of the man whose eyes were opened—an attitude of prompt obedience and of courageous and constantly increasing faith.*

(a) *He did not resent the putting of clay on his eyes, nor hesitate to go when Jesus told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam.* He did not ask, like Naaman (2 Kings v. 12), if there were not some better way. "*He went, . . . and came seeing.*" Faith triumphs not by arguing, but by obeying. It does not expend its energy upon solving mysteries, but it lives in trustful obedience to the divine truth which has been revealed. Similarly the ten lepers were healed as they went in obedience to the command of Christ to go and show themselves to the priests. There was nothing in mere walking or running in the highway to heal them. "*As they went, they were cleansed.*" (Luke xvii. 14.) If they had waited for the leprosy to disappear from their bodies before starting to show themselves to the priests in obedience to Christ's command, they would have remained uncleansed to their dying days.

Some souls wish to wait to begin obeying Christ until after they are regenerated; but this is to invert the true order. The blind soul must do as did this blind man, who began to obey without sight and thereby obtained sight with which to obey with sight. The faith which brings salvation is not a faith which takes Christ tentatively and stipulates that it will obey him if the experiment turns out favorably. Saving faith concerns itself with obeying God, and trusts Christ to do the saving work while it obeys. In the "obedience of faith" is the way of salvation.

(b) *He allowed no questionings of the Pharisees to confuse the clear consciousness of his own experience.* To certain of his neighbors who doubted his identity he said: "I am he." When they asked him how his eyes were opened, he told them with the utmost candor and clearness by whom and how it was done. When they brought him before the Sanhedrin, he repeated in the same manner the story of his cure, and refused to be driven from it, or to be confused about it, or to join in any condemnation of his benefactor, despite all the questions the Pharisees could raise and all the threatenings they could make. He stood flatly and firm-



ly on the solid ground of experience, declaring: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." An ounce of experience is worth a ton of theory.

(c) *While standing on his experience, he would not profess more than he believed.* His faith was not able to go farther than seeing in Jesus "a prophet"; but in the face of a threatening court he would not hesitate to go that far; and so when they asked him, "What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?" he witnessed a good, though imperfect, confession, saying: "He is a prophet." He held "the beginning of his confidence steadfastly," and in the end was on that account made "a partaker of Christ." (Heb. iii. 14.) A false faith can come to nothing but falsehood; but an imperfect faith, if faithfully followed, will shine more and more unto the perfect day. Men are not called on to profess more faith than they have, but they are required to live up to all the faith they have.

(d) *His faith gave him courage.* He would endure all that was involved in Jewish excommunication (a most painful form of ecclesiastical ostracism) rather than deny the good "Prophet" who had blessed him with sight.

The Jews were afraid of the peasant Prophet, whom they had resolved to destroy; but this plain man was not afraid of them after his sight was restored. A little faith, though defenseless among men, is far braver than entrenched skepticism.

(e)  *Holding bravely such faith as he had, he came to the full knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.)*

3. *The attitude of the man's neighbors and parents—an attitude of cowardice, compromise, and ingratitude which left them in faithlessness. The Jews had agreed that if any man confessed that Jesus was the Christ, he should be excommunicated (verse 22). This sentence of excommunication was a fearful sentence, involving confiscation of property, "boycotting in trade" (as we say in modern phrase), ostracism of family, dishonor in life, and disgrace in death. Such consequences were too much for the neighbors; and so when they saw one with eyes opened, whose blindness had formerly brought to them his annoying beggary, they*

did not rejoice, as they ought to have done, and go with him to seek and worship the Saviour who had blessed him; but they sought at first to discredit the wonderful fact, and then they carried him away to the Sanhedrin. His parents, with even meaner ingratitude, said: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not." All of which was false. Cowardice and ingratitude are always false when they speak. His neighbors and his parents returned to spiritual darkness and unbelief. We hear of them no more. The Light of the World came to them, and they rejected him; and the eyes of their souls went out.

4. *The attitude of the Pharisees—an attitude of cowardly confusion, obstinate rejection of light, and hopeless darkness.*

(a) *They put aside all the evidence of Christ's divinity to find proof that he was a sinner, and were more concerned to condemn him as a Sabbath breaker than to praise him for his merciful deed.* What utter confusion of moral values do selfish prejudice and willful sinfulness make!

(b) *Their infidelity was utterly heartless.* They cruelly reviled the man as one "born in

sins"; but Jesus asked nothing of his past history. They had a theory, born of ecclesiastical ambition, to sustain at all cost, and Christ had a mission of compassion to fulfill at all hazard. They turned the man out of the synagogue; but Jesus received the outcast into a heavenly fellowship, and blessed him.

(c) *In the final issue the Master could do nothing but leave them in rayless darkness and hopeless sin.* "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind," etc. Their hatred of light had become complete, and their love of darkness had become supreme; and the act of mercy by which the blind man was made to see, both physically and spiritually, only made their spiritual blindness more incurable. Men are not lost for lack of truth, but for love of falsehood; not for want of evidence, but for the rejection of it. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i. 21.)

(d) *No moral condition is stationary.* A little light loved and followed leads to the full

light of day; a sinful doubt indulged culminates in utter darkness and defeat.

The blind man came from utter darkness to brightest day; but of the light-hating ecclesiastics we read: "And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." When light is rejected, sin must remain. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John iii. 19.) How great is that darkness!

XXIII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AGAINST ROB-  
BERS AND HIRELINGS.

JOHN X. 1-21.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

## XXIII.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD AGAINST ROB- BERS AND HIRELINGS.

THE words of Jesus which are the subject of this study were called forth by the incident of the healing of the man born blind and his excommunication by the ecclesiastical authorities at Jerusalem. It is a continuation of the conversation which arose out of his case. The compassion of the Master toward the blind man was in marked contrast with the harsh treatment of him by the Pharisees, and that contrast is sharply delineated in the parable of the Good Shepherd in opposition to the "robbers" and "thieves" and "hirelings." Jesus calls himself "the Door" also; for no single simile can express all that he is to needy and faithful souls. He at once by his discourse establishes the legitimacy of his own authority over men and expresses the illegitimacy of the authority of all who, like the Jewish ecclesiastics, seek to "lord it over God's heritage" for selfish and wicked ends. In setting forth the characteristics of the Good Shepherd he discloses the bound-



less tenderness of his own love and at the same time brings in view the marks of all true under-shepherds who partake of his Spirit.

1. *The approach of the Good Shepherd to the sheep is not indirect, furtive, and violent; but is open, gentle, and persuasive.* “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.” Christ is not a robber who steals in upon men by illegitimate courses that he may lay hands upon them stealthily and bear them away by force. Jesus *drew* the man born blind, while the Jewish rulers sought to *drive* him.

2. *The Good Shepherd may be distinguished from the false by the fact that he knows the sheep and the sheep know him.* “But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what

things they were which he spake unto them.” He has not only the pass-key to the door of the fold, but the password to the ears of the flock. He knows the sheep individually—“he calleth his own sheep *by name.*” So he called Matthew at the receipt of custom, Nathanael under the fig tree, Peter from his boat, and Saul on the Damascus road. How perfectly he knew the life history and the heart history of the Samaritan woman at the well! How infinitely beyond the mean thought of the Pharisee, in whose house he was dining, did he know “what manner of woman” it was that touched him (Luke vii. 39) when “a woman of the city” anointed him with precious ointment and washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head!

And the sheep know the Good Shepherd as truly as he knows them, “for they know his voice.” They cannot always tell how they know it. Who can tell how the voice of a father or a mother is known? It may be that years have elapsed since we buried out of sight the dear parents who gave us birth and watched with tender care over us in childhood; but we have never mistaken the voices of any other persons for theirs. They had an accent

and a tone quite unmistakable. If we should go to heaven, and for ten thousand years should not find them among the innumerable company that walk in white, and one day we should hear them speak, their tones would have a tenderness all their own, sweeter and dearer than the strains of an archangel's song. Can it be possible that our Lord has put into the voices of our earthly parents accents which we can never mistake for another's and yet has no distinguishing voice of his own? Nay, verily. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. ii. 19), and they know him. There is a divine speech to which the heart answers.

3. *The Good Shepherd is further distinguished from robbers, thieves, and hirelings by his unselfishness.* "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because

he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep." Robbers and thieves come to take life for their own benefit and profit; Jesus comes to sacrifice his own life that the flock may "have life," and that they may "have it more abundantly."

The hireling serves for wages only, having no ownership in the flock and no love for the sheep. In danger he flees just because he is a hireling. He has never had any motive for caring for the sheep beyond his own welfare; and when that welfare is endangered, what else should he do than follow in flight the same motive which he has always pursued? Christ made the cause of man his cause. He came not as heaven's hireling to secure fleece and flesh, but as earth's servant to seek and to save the lost. He could not save himself without losing the flock of God, and so he laid down his life for the sheep. "It was a profound truth that the populace uttered when they taunted him on the cross: 'He saved others, himself he cannot save.' No, of course not. He that will save others cannot save himself." (Frederick Robertson.)

4. *The Good Shepherd's self-sacrifice is not in any sense constrained except by the constraint of his own love.* "I am the good shepherd, and

know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” The Master said: “I lay down my life for the sheep.” Again: “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” And let it ever be remembered that in this self-sacrifice the Saviour did nothing alien to the nature or strange to the heart of the divine Father. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” “The sacrifice of Christ is but a mirror of the love of God. It is but the sublime expression of the unselfishness of God.”

*5. The Saviour is so many-sided that the beautiful figure of the Good Shepherd is not sufficient to express his nature and work; he is*

*the Door of the fold also.* "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." The Jewish authorities had excommunicated the blind man; and this meant to one who had been brought up as a child of Abraham the worst form of ostracism. It made him a social outcast and damaged him in both spiritual and temporal things. To him it seemed nothing less than exclusion from all the sources of earthly comfort and heavenly life. In compassion for this poor abused sheep Jesus declared, as against the assumed authority of the Pharisees to close the door of hope against him: "I am the door." It was the assertion upon the part of the Lord that in himself alone was found access to spiritual blessings. He claimed for himself the exclusive right of determining who should and who should not enter into the fold of God. "By this claim to be the Door, Jesus claims to be the Founder of the one permanent society of men. Through him alone have men access to a position of security, to association with all that is worthiest among men, to a never-failing life and a boundless freedom. He did not use his words at random, and this at least is contained in them: He gathers men around his person,

and assures us that he holds the key to life; that if he admits us, words of exclusion pronounced by others are but idle breath; that if he excludes us, the approval and applause of the world will not waft us in. No claim could possibly be greater. . . . And this simple and memorable claim has remained through all the Christian centuries the bulwark against ecclesiastical tyranny, not indeed by preventing injustice and outrage, but entirely robbing excommunication of its sting in the conscience that is right with its Lord." (Marcus Dods.)

6. *The tenderest words of Jesus are full of terror to them who are wrongly related to him.* To the poor blind man he was a gentle Shepherd; but his office of Shepherd made him the foe of the Pharisees, whom he denounced as thieves and robbers and hirelings. He showed that they were neither good shepherds nor good sheep, neither good leaders of the people nor faithful followers of God. To the excommunicated beggar he was the Door which opened to let penitent outcasts into a place of security and to let them out to green pastures of spiritual good; but to the Jewish rulers he was a barred door to exclude them from the fold of God. It must be so. His gospel is and ever

must be to some a “savor of life unto life,” and to others a “savor of death unto death.” (2 Cor. ii. 16.) The same blessed sunlight which falls upon the living body to give health and strength falls on the dead carcass to work corruption.

7. *The call of the Good Shepherd divides men even as a shepherd separates his sheep from goats.* “There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?” In judging him these men judged themselves; the same words and the same deeds of Jesus were before them all; yet to some he seemed a demoniac, while to others he appeared as one dispensing divine mercy. His words tested them and divided them. What they thought of Christ revealed what they were themselves. To hearts filled with devilish depravity he was one possessed of the devil, although his gracious words and merciful deeds showed such a conception of him to be absurd. The revelation of God always operates to reveal men also. “With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with



an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." (Ps. xviii. 25, 26.) A man's own character determines what the disclosures of God are to him. The pure in heart see God, but the impure destroy their power to discern him.

**XXIV.**

**CHRIST'S CLAIMS CONTESTED AND  
ATTESTED.**

JOHN x. 22-42.

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

39 Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand,

40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

## XXIV.

### CHRIST'S CLAIMS CONTESTED AND ATTESTED.

BETWEEN the Feast of Tabernacles, about the close of which Jesus gave sight to the man born blind and spoke the parable of the Good Shepherd, and the Feast of the Dedication, at which occurred the incident and utterances considered in this study, two months elapsed. The Feast of Tabernacles was held in October, and the Feast of the Dedication in December. It is impossible to say where or how the Lord was engaged during the interval between the two feasts; but it is certain that popular interest in his person and work in no wise diminished during the time. When, therefore, he appeared at the Feast of the Dedication and "walked in the temple in Solomon's porch," the Jewish leaders and their followers made a circle around him and eagerly asked, "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." The spirit which moved them to make this demand upon him was not unlike that which inspired the words

of "his brethren" just before the Feast of Tabernacles, when they urged him to "show himself to the world." (John vii. 1-5.) The Jewish leaders desired, furthermore, to draw from him on this occasion an explicit assertion of his Messiahship or a disclaimer that he was the Christ. The Feast of the Dedication, which commemorated the reconsecration of the temple by Judas Maccabæus after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes, appealed strongly to the patriotic sentiments of the Jewish people. If Jesus at such a feast disclaimed being the Messiah, the multitudes who were favorably inclined to him would turn away from him in disappointment, if not in disgust. On the other hand, if he asserted his Messiahship, his enemies would have good grounds to accuse him to the Roman authorities as a ringleader of insurrection. In such a dilemma his foes sought to involve him; but he answered them so wisely that they failed to entangle him thus, and their failure so enraged them that they were ready to stone him. In his skillful answer to them he really made a higher claim than that implied by their conception of the Messiah—a religio-political deliverer—and asserted nothing less than his divine Sonship. It was this

loftier claim which excited their fury. With them the claim to be the Messiah was one thing, and the claim to be divine was quite another thing. If he had claimed to be no more than the Christ for whom they hoped, his words would not have provoked any violent outburst of excitement; but when they perceived that his words clearly and intentionally implied the claim of oneness with God, they were filled with uncontrollable indignation. The stern monotheism of the Jewish mind could not tolerate for a moment the idea of any man, not even their expected Messiah, being equal with God. The claim of a mere man to such equality they contested with implacable wrath. The answer of Jesus to their angry opposition set forth how his claim was divinely attested. In the face of their fierce indignation he calmly and uncompromisingly made these utterances of supreme self-assertion. His words to them shut up them and all men to the alternative of adoring him as God or attacking him as a blasphemous impostor. There is no middle ground upon which a reasonable mind can stand.

1. *The claims of Christ cannot be clearly conceived nor obediently allowed by the carnal mind.* "Then came the Jews round about him,

and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." At first sight the answer of Jesus seems indirect and evasive; but upon reflection it is evident that their state of mind made it impossible for him to answer them more "plainly." If he had flatly replied, "I am the Messiah," his answer would have been misleading to them and false to himself; for their conception of the Messiah was totally at variance with the claim which he set up and infinitely below it. He could not, without speaking falsely, say that he was such a Messiah as they desired and expected; he could not accept the position to which their idea of Messiahship assigned the Christ without abdicating his divine Sonship. He would not renounce his heavenly throne in order to fill the political and earthly office about which they inquired. Hence he could do nothing more than point them to his works to ascertain his claims; and his works only perplexed them the more by reason of their carnal preconceptions. He was constrained by their moral condition to speak as did St. Paul when the apostle wrote

to the Corinthians: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.)

He could not speak otherwise to these worldly princes of Israel, and his words enraged rather than enlightened them. His light shone in their darkness, "and the darkness comprehended it not." It is impossible for Christ to respond plainly to the captious demands of the carnal mind; his nature cannot be stated in the terms of man's wisdom, nor his claims conformed to its conceptions. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) The claims of Jesus could not be compressed within the limits of the misconceived Messiahship of the Jewish mind, nor can they be conformed to the metaphysical molds fashioned by the rationalists of our day or the philosophers of any day. The nature of Jesus transcends the limits of the fleshly intellect.

2. *The claims of Jesus, which are contested by men of carnal minds, are attested by men of spiritual minds.* "But ye believe not, because



ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Here is an echo of what was said by Jesus in the parable of the Good Shepherd two months before. Surrounded by the same foes and antagonized by the same spirit now as at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Master recurred to the same thought.

This idea of the attestation of his claims by the spiritually minded and the denial of them by the carnally minded he repeatedly uttered in various forms of expression. To the Jews whom he addressed while he was standing in the court of the women at the Feast of Tabernacles he said: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." (John viii. 43.) And again: "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (John viii. 47.)

The idea which runs through all these passages and through the parable of the Good Shepherd is that there is a heavenly dialect, a divine idiom which a spiritual ear only can hear and understand. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,

because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

How sad is the state of that alienation of the human heart from God the Father when it no longer understands the language of the celestial homeland! An exile who has forgotten his native tongue and to whom the accents of divine love sound as a foolish and senseless jargon! Who but the Father can teach the prodigal of this far country to understand and speak again the speech of the home?

3. *The claims of Jesus to equality with God are attested by his ability to impart spiritual life to the human soul.* “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”

Jesus often reiterated the truth that his followers, who were able to hear his words, did also draw spiritual life from him. In the parable of the good shepherd he said of his sheep, who know his voice: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John x. 10.) Now in this passage the same truth is proclaimed again:

“My sheep hear my voice. . . . And I give unto them eternal life.” In a somewhat similar line of thought he said to the Jews in the treasury: “If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.” (John viii. 51.) And again on a former occasion he affirmed: “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and will raise him up at the last day.” (John vi. 40.)

The same lofty truth sounds in his high-priestly prayer, when he prays for his followers: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” The divine life in his disciples—a life in spiritual quality one with that of the Father—attests to men the claims of the heaven-sent Son. Not any nor all the philosophers and teachers of men have been able to make the kind of men which faith in Jesus begets. Christians are of an unearthly type of being. Platonists, Hegelians, and Spence-rians are of the earth earthy; mundane marks certify the order to which they belong. But Christians are born from the skies. If Christ ceased to make them, the species would be-

come extinct. No human skill or wisdom or power is sufficient to produce even one Christian life. Christians cannot be manufactured by men. No one can produce them except that One who said: "I and my Father are one." He mediates the divine life for human souls, and makes men partakers of the divine nature.

4. *The claims of Christ are attested by his works.* "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him."

If the evangelic records may be trusted, Je-

Jesus never corrected any estimate of himself because he regarded it as too high, although he declined to accept any low estimate of his place in the universe. When adoring followers acknowledged him as the Son of God, he received with joy such a confession of faith (Matt. xvi. 16, 17) and received with satisfaction their offered worship (Matt. xiv. 33).

If furious enemies rose up against him on account of his high claims, he made no abatement or qualification of those claims in order to appease their wrath. When on this occasion the Jews took up stones to stone him, he did not undertake to placate them or to stay their violence by saying to them that they had misunderstood him when they inferred from his words that he claimed to be equal with God. On the contrary, he proceeded to justify the claim by appealing to his own works and their scriptures. He asserted that the moral excellence of the works he had done among them manifested that the source of the things done was a divine Son revealing in the visible world the glory of the invisible Father. He placed himself far above the godlike men who had been called gods in the inviolable Hebrew scriptures, because in their official stations they

were the representatives of God to the people of their day. He laid a higher claim than theirs to the name of God; he claimed that he had an exclusive right to the name, not because he was a *godlike man*, but because he was the *God-Man*—the veritable Son of God, “whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world.”

He refuted their charge of blasphemy against him by asserting for himself such a place in the universe as made the sin of blasphemy impossible to him. From meeting their accusation of blasphemy he advanced in his defense to say that his right to such a sublime place can be tested by candid scrutiny of his works to ascertain whether they showed that he truly represented God or not. He gives them to understand that if they had been spiritually minded men they would have seen by the intuition of faith that he was divine; but that even without such faith-knowledge, while standing on the lower level of sense-knowledge, they might, by a fair consideration of the work, take the measure of the worker, and from the intellectual perception thus attained ascend to the higher apprehension of his character; that from conclusions reached by the sight of his deeds they might rise to the assurance of faith con-

cerning his person. "Though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may *know*, and *believe*, that the Father is in me, and I in him." By this path Nicodemus advanced from impression by a miracle to conviction by faith; and along the same way the doubting Thomas went hesitatingly until he came at last to fall down in adoring trust at the feet of his Lord, crying in rapturous confidence: "My Lord and my God." (John xx. 28.)

Nevertheless, there is something better than the belief which starts in what the senses can perceive. Wherefore said Jesus to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John xx. 29.) The blessedness of faith is better than the perceptions of the senses.

5. *The claims of Christ are more readily accepted by rightly disposed men with meager advantages than by proud and worldly men with the best opportunities for knowledge.* "Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no mir-

acle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there."

Our Lord by divine words had taught the Jews, and his words had only provoked them to wish to stone him. (John viii. 59 and verse 31.) He had appealed to them through his divine works, and they had risen up to take him by force. (John vii. 30, 32, 44, and verse 39.) He could do nothing more, and sadly he turned away from them when he perceived that their unbelief was hopeless. He left Jerusalem, to visit the city no more until the final Passover. He retired to Bethania, north of the Sea of Galilee, on the eastern side of Jordan, and dwelt awhile among a people who were more ready to believe on him and more willing to acknowledge his divine claims. The emphasis of the last verse in this chapter rests on the word "there," and marks the contrast between his rejection in Jerusalem and his reception at Bethania. The plain people east of the Jordan had heard John the Baptist say, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"; so also had the worldly men of Jerusalem; but the peasants of Israel, unhindered by godless ambitions,



accepted Jesus as the Son of God when the ecclesiastical princes were ready to stone him. With less light than the Pharisees, the people beyond Jordan saw with clearer vision because they looked at Jesus with single eyes. Not without regard to the spiritual condition of the plain men of Bethania did Jesus withdraw from Jerusalem and go to dwell for a season among them. He chose his place of retirement with the evident intention of carrying forward the unfinished work of grace in their hearts which was begun by the ministry of the Baptist. The prophet of the wilderness had been beheaded, dying in disappointment because the visible fruits of his brave and fervent ministry had been no greater. But his Lord did not intend that the faithful herald's work should be wasted. In this region of Gaulanitis John had planted, and to it Jesus now went to give the increase. The associations of the place doubtless attracted him and also opened the hearts of the people to his coming among them; both he and they must have remembered the wonderful tones of that prophetic voice, now hushed in death by Herod's headsman, which once had cried in the wilderness: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In words which throbbed

with tender memories of John the people said: "John did no miracle; but all things that John spoke of this man were true." Through the portals of the tomb came again to their hearts the voice of the Baptist, its tones made by his death more persuasive than ever before, calling them to repentance and faith; the past, with its memories, and the present, with its opportunities, united to draw them to trust in Jesus. "And many believed on him *there*." From the wise and prudent at Jerusalem he withdrew himself when they would not receive him; but to these unsophisticated children of the wilderness he went and revealed himself. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off." (Ps. cxxxviii. 6.)

6. *The work of a faithful witness to Christ is never in vain.* John's ministry in the region east of the Jordan did not bear fruit at once; he died without seeing the work of his hands established. But now it is said: "Many believed on him *there*." Many a faithful servant of Christ has passed away from the world crying like a sobbing child at nightfall and praying that his Lord might care for his unfinished tasks and establish the work of his hands. And

Christ with his own presence and power, as in this case of John, has perfected the work of his devoted servants. Love's labor is never lost.

Many are still in the world sowing precious seed and watering their plantings with their tears, while the unresponsive soil seems to mock their tearful toil. But let all such be assured that the Master marks their faithful labors, and one day he will see to it that they "come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." Of the places upon which such pure souls pour out their lives as libations to his honor it shall be said: "Many believed on him *there.*"

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And now, O thou divine Lord and Saviour, take these poor chapters, the work of thy unworthy servant's hands, and bless them to the glory of thy name and the increase of faith in the earth. The day is far spent; the night is at hand; thy servant toils now amid tasks which he cannot hope to finish before dark. Wilt thou not perfect that which concerneth him? Be pleased to follow with thy favor where these ill-written lines may go, that through thy amazing grace they may quicken faith in some hearts. So may it be said of where they may go: "Some believed on him *there.*"

