GOD'S CHOICE OF MEN

A STUDY OF SCRIPTURE

BY

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"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

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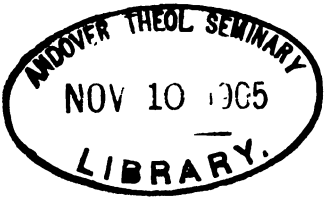

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To

THE MEMBERS OF THE BRICK CHURCH

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

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PART FIRST

GOD'S CALL AND MAN'S ANSWER

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"But as many as received him, to them gave he power."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Mr. Bancroft has called Calvin "the guide of republics";[1] and it is a common remark among historical writers that for the present liberties of the world we are largely in debt to that great theologian and his disciples. It was a time when the cause of liberty stood in sore need of a champion. The first dawn of the Reformation had brought bright promises of freedom to Europe, but very soon the sky was clouded. The Protestants soon fell to wasting their strength in mutual jealousies and all sorts of wild extravagances. Luther died. Rome, recovering from her first panic, sets herself to regain the lost ground. Loyola sees visions and organizes his order of Jesuits, that most terrific organ of spiritual despotism. In Italy and Spain all troublesome inquiry has been trampled out by the Inquisition. In France the bell of St. Bartholomew has tolled. In Germany the imperial armies are steadily recapturing the land.

[1] History of the United States, vol. i, p. 181.

Meanwhile, across the Channel, as Froude says, "it would have fared ill with England had there been no hotter blood there than filtered in the sluggish veins of the officials of the Establishment. There needed an enthusiasm fiercer far to encounter the revival of Catholic fanaticism."[1] For many years no one could guess which way the popular preference would finally incline; and till that was decided only the life of a queen, constantly threatened by assassination, intervened between the Kingdom and a restoration of the old Church.

In all Europe only two little specks of territory appear where men so detest the old falsehoods and so believe the new truths, that you may kill them off man by man, but you can never pound their new convictions out of them. And to-day it is because those two little countries would not know when they were beaten that Europe and America are free, and men can read the Word of God, and offer their own prayers, and think their own thoughts, and choose their own rulers, and make their own laws. We owe it, under God, to those two little countries, Holland and Scotland, invincible through the stubborn strength and vitality of their Calvinistic faith. That is what my historical teachers have told me.

In our day these doctrines of the old Reformed

[1] History of England, vol. x, p. 114.

Churches have rather gone out of fashion; and I would not deny that there may have been reason for some change of doctrinal statement, or at least of doctrinal emphasis. For the conditions of the war have changed greatly since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No one threatens us to-day with ecclesiastical oppression, and therefore we have no need to lock ourselves up in the old sixteenth century fort. What we do need in this twentieth century is a battle-cry that shall call all Christians out from their idle defences, to go and win the world for Christ. That need was not in mind when the old Reformation formulas were constructed, and finds no adequate expression in them.

Yet it is hard to believe that convictions which once showed such wholesome vitality could ever altogether lose their usefulness, or that the time could ever come when we might afford to throw them out upon the rubbish-heap. On the other hand, a time might come when the liberties of men should be threatened from some new quarter, and then it might appear that the only availing defence for human freedom would be this same old faith in a sovereign choice of God; for just that is the essence of Calvinism—it is a faith in God's sovereign choice of men. If the individual of to-day has little to fear from the absolutism of king or priest, he might sometimes have much to fear from the

absolutism of the people. Triumphant democracy might develop its own powers of civil and religious oppression, and so once more the world may have to turn for deliverance to some small company, or companies, of men who have that kind of faith in God and fear of God which deliver from all fear of mortal man.

It is with such thoughts in mind that I offer this little book, a new-fashioned treatment of the old-fashioned doctrine of God's election of men. The provoking occasion of the book will be explained in the opening sentences of the next chapter. The remaining chapters of the book are designed to illustrate from different sides the scriptural doctrine of God's plan for men and choice of men. The aim has not been to treat the theme dogmatically, or in a line with any confessional statement; indeed, it is hardly to be supposed that my effort would receive the unqualified approval of those who profess to speak for the traditional positions. I myself do not profess to speak for traditional positions, or any other, but simply to open the Word of God and let that speak for itself.

For the sake of convenience and clearness, I have divided my material into two parts, the first of which will give from Scripture various examples of God's choice of men, and various examples of the human response to this divine election. The

later part of the book will consider the purpose of the election, raising the inquiry what God chooses men for.

It is with regard to this later inquiry that the older statements of the doctrine now seem to many of us most seriously defective. The Reformation creeds might have left one to suppose that God sometimes elects His favorites to a sinecure; while, according to Scripture, God, showing no such partiality, elects men to office, and the office must be either filled or forfeited.

"Election to service," as Dr. Henry van Dyke says,[1] "is the supreme saving truth." Faithful service will bring rich reward, no doubt, therefore election is the greatest favor to the individual; but any unfaithful servant may have reason to wish that he had never been counted among the elect at all. We are told that "many shall come from the east and west to sit down in the kingdom of God," while the degenerate children of the chosen race are left out. That solemn truth of the perils of privilege should never be omitted from the scriptural doctrine of God's choice of men.

I hope it may appear, before we are through, that this old faith in a divine election still offers men the right sort of courage for worthy living and for good hope in dying.

[1] The Gospel for an Age of Doubt, p. 316.

CHAPTER II

GOD'S ETERNAL DECREE

Mark xii, 2: "And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard."[1]

SOME months ago an editorial in a leading newspaper of this city contained the following statement: "The first duty of a Presbyterian clergyman who has professed what he does not believe is to vindicate his own sincerity. In our opinion, the common people are less likely to be troubled on their own account than on account of a spiritual leader who is outwardly faithful to a creed which they have reason to think he has inwardly rejected."

The writer had already laid it down as a matter of common knowledge that a great many Presbyterian ministers share the view of one in a neighboring presbytery who had just been affirming that "there is no such God as the God of the Westminster Confession."

Has this journalist, who so lightly charges his neighbors with hypocrisy, taken pains to inform

[1] Preached in the Brick Church, New York City, December 18, 1904.

himself what the Westminster Confession really teaches concerning God? I will quote some of its characteristic utterances: "There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, . . . almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

That may not be a perfect definition of the divine nature, but, for my part, I should not like to undertake the task of writing a better.

I admit that the next chapter of the Confession, which treats of God's Eternal Decree, says some things not easy to reconcile with this earlier definition. It has been confessed by innumerable loyal Presbyterians that our fathers tried to settle too many things about these high mysteries,[1] "reasoning," to quote Milton's words—and I have always suspected that when the poet wrote these words the memory of certain weary discussions in the Westminster Assembly was floating through his mind—

[1] For instance, in the distinction between common grace and special or saving grace, a distinction concerning which our theological disputants have had so much to say, while the Scripture maintains an impressive silence.

"reasoning of fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute, finding no end in wandering mazes lost." [1]

We have never professed to believe the Confession perfect. Such a belief is forbidden the Presbyterian minister by the very terms of his reception of the Confession; for before receiving it he is made to say that the Scripture is the only infallible rule.

But whatever you think of that Third Chapter as originally compiled, it must now be read in the light of the Declaratory Statement formally adopted in the Revision of 1902 and 1903, and which now forms part of our doctrinal standard. Listen to this: "The doctrine of God's Eternal Decree is held in harmony with the doctrine of His love to all mankind, His gift of His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and His readiness to bestow His saving grace on all who seek it; . . . that God desires not the death of any sinner; . . . that His decree hinders no man from accepting (His gracious offer); that no man is condemned except on the ground of his sin."

That is the present Confession of our Church, and I am willing to take my stand before the world, and call God to witness that I have no apologies to offer for it, and employ no mental reservation in subscribing to it.

[1] Paradise Lost, ii, line 560.

But even to go back to the original language of the Westminster fathers concerning this mystery of God's decree—for of course it is on this doctrine of decrees that we Presbyterians have been most commonly accused of misrepresenting the divine nature—let me read you their first article on that subject: "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

I have admitted that, in my opinion, our fathers tried to peer too far into this unsearchable mystery, but if you must attempt to say anything on the subject, I think it would be hard to better that statement. The men who wrote that article were not fatalists; Christian believers never are. Mahometans may be, I suppose, a sort of fatalists, but not the most hopeless sort, for they believe in God. The hopeless fatalism is atheism. The charge so often made against our Confession of Faith, that it marks some men out for blessedness and others for ruin by a rigid fate, and without regard to what they may choose to do, is a false charge. The school of teaching against which that charge could be justly preferred is that of materi-

alistic science and philosophy. It is a simple matter of fact that belief in a personal and sovereign God is the one thing that has established man's belief in the freedom of the human will. So our Confession says: "Nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures (by the divine decree), nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established."

So much, then, for this Third Chapter of the Confession. For myself, I like the language of the Bible itself better than any later creed, and prefer as a general thing to take my faith from it at first-hand; but when a charge has been published that a great many of us are hypocrites because we do not rise in our places and denounce and repudiate this venerable symbol, any Presbyterian minister may fairly ask leave to answer the charge.

But now will you come out into a larger region. Turn your thoughts back from the Westminster Confession to the scriptural doctrine which those men were trying to confess. For it is a shallow blunder to suppose that the Westminster divines invented the doctrine of God's decree. They were simply doing their best to make what they could of a mystery which they found—and which we shall find unless we close our eyes—in the Bible itself.

Paul says that God chose Jacob over Esau before the children were born, and before they could do

good or evil.[1] There is the whole hard mystery of election. He says, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?"[2] He says, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."[3]

You say that you wish the Westminster divines had left out certain articles in the Third Chapter of their Confession, and I agree with you; but certainly, if the decision had been with me, I should have begged Paul to leave out that Ninth Chapter of Romans. But there it is; this hard mystery of divine election of men was planted in the Bible long before it appeared in the creed.

But more than that, this mystery was fixed deep in human life long before it appeared in the Bible; God's choice of men—an election of some to positions of great advantage over others, and without any reference to what they themselves had done, good or bad; for in so many things the election was settled before ever the children were born. You yourself, who were born in this blessed country, in a Christian home, to an inheritance of freedom and enlightenment and faith—who made you thus to differ from the child who was born the same day in Central Africa, to an inheritance of cannibalism and fetich worship; or that wretched little Hindu baby, who was born to starve to death in the next

[1] Romans ix, 11. [2] I Corinthians iv, 7. [3] Romans ix, 16.

famine? There is the mystery fixed deep in the constitution of human life, creed or no creed, Bible or no Bible. Paul simply recognizes this mystery, and with what wisdom God gave him he tries to make some headway through it, but often gives up the task. How often he turns back from some experiment at solution with his emphatic "God forbid"; as if he wished to say, "Whatever it all means, certainly it cannot mean that to which my argument was leading me. God cannot be untrue or unjust. It cannot be that we must continue in sin to make His grace abound." "God forbid," says Paul. It really seems to me that one clear difference between Paul, the inspired man, and the uninspired men who formulated our creeds, is, that when their vigorous reasonings had sometimes threatened to run away with them, they did not always know enough to draw back, as he so often drew back, with a "God forbid."

Nevertheless, those men, like the Apostle before them, were only trying to make what they could of this mystery which appears everywhere in life, that men are chosen to a great many positions of privilege without any reference to their own previous merit or demerit. So often the most important part of the choice was settled before ever they were born; Jacob preferred to Esau, before the children were born.

For the last few generations it has been a common fashion—I might say a fad—to ignore this evident fact, and reason as if there could be no distinctions among men except those which the men make for themselves. In our day some even carry the principle so far as to argue that men ought not to be allowed to make these distinctions for themselves; for instance, a trades-union will sometimes insist upon a uniform rate of wages for all in a certain line of work, without any regard to the skill or industry of the particular workman; there must be no election among them; all equal.

Our own national Declaration of Independence did not go so far as that, but it leads off with this as a self-evident truth, "that all men are created equal." That was a noble State paper; we do well to be proud of it; but can any mortal man tell what they meant by that opening sentence, that all men are created equal? How equal?—in height? in weight? in muscular strength? in intellectual insight? in amiable disposition? For a self-evident truth this one is singularly obscure; and even if they meant to say, "all men are equal in social or political rights," you must remember that many of the signers of that Declaration were and continued to be slave-owners; how would they define that self-evident equality between the Caucasian master and

the African slave? It was simply one of those fine sayings that men can make themselves think they believe, if you do not crowd them too hard to tell what it means.

I suppose they were trying to say that we ought to aim at giving all men an equal chance to make the most of themselves, which we all believe, but that is not at all what they said. We honor the great Declaration because, in spite of some questionable utterances, due to the prevailing influence of Rousseau and other French philosophers, it marked a noble struggle for human rights and liberties. But let me tell you that the type of religious belief which gave birth to our Westminster Confession, this belief in God's sovereign election of men, has really done more for human rights and liberties than any political document ever written in the world.

As a monument, or bulwark of human freedom, I do not hesitate to affirm that this Westminster Confession itself deserves to outrank the American Declaration of Independence; for it is more truly universal and fearless in its democracy. It does not deal in misleading platitudes about all men created equal, but it does tell of "God's elect"; and that may be the plain Dutch burgher as against mighty Philip of Spain; it may be John Knox, or his very humblest hearer, as against Marie Stuart,

the Queen; it may be one of Cromwell's plain pikemen as against King Charles and all his nobles; it may be a black slave on a Southern plantation as against his master up in Philadelphia signing the Declaration. 'For God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are.' In the long fight for human rights and liberties nothing has ever put such heroic courage into the breasts of humble men as this belief in a sovereign choice of God.

That all men are created equal is not a self-evident truth, nor any other kind of truth; and if you try to build any great structure—civil, political, industrial, religious—on such a doubtful foundation, sooner or later it will give you trouble. It is simply not true that human life is a dead level of mediocre equality. Men have always been made to differ; that is the self-evident truth; and a Christian's belief about it is simply this, that all these many evident differences between himself and his fellows, many of them less highly favored than he, were not given because he had earned them, but are under the control of an all-wise and a most loving God, the carrying out of some gracious purpose

of His. That is the substance of this doctrine of decrees, of God's sovereign election of men.

But now we come to the great question what it is all for. We cannot understand where the difference comes from, except as we consent to leave it to the wise decision of God. The Bible does not say where the difference comes from, but it does show clearly what these differences ought to be working toward. And just here, let me say, was a most serious defect of our Westminster Confession of Faith; for our Confession did not show clearly what God elects men for; what He would have them do with their election. That was a very serious fault, and it is well that we have partly corrected it by the new chapter on the love of God and missions. This is by far the most important part of the doctrine of election as it is taught in Scripture.

It begins far back at the beginning with Abraham, the man who was called out from among his idolatrous kindred in Ur of the Chaldees that he might become the friend of God. But why did God call him? Was it because He had some unfair partiality for Abraham, and some unfair prejudice against the other nations of the earth? Did He choose to lift friend Abraham up, that He might push the unfriended heathen down? Abraham's descendants were apt to think so, but their own Bible was always against them, for it said that

Abraham was chosen that in his seed all the families of the earth might be blessed.[1]

Then, a few generations later, God chose the child Jacob rather than the child Esau, and chose him above all other babes then coming into the world; so that this Jacob and his descendants, this family of Israel, should be the chosen people. But what for? Was it in order that God might bless Israel with knowledge of Him, and curse the other nations with heathenish ignorance? No, no; they were to be a priestly nation, ministering to all the world whatever knowledge of the true God they got themselves. They might not fully understand it for a while, but that was God's plan from the beginning; and when Christ came, He and His apostles told the Jews plainly that God had been choosing them all these years in order that through them He might bless all the nations of the world with His salvation. The great body of the Jews were unwilling to accept this view of their election, and so they forfeited their privilege. They, the elect, were shut out, and the other unelected nations came in ahead of them. "The last were first, and the first last." That is the theme that runs through the whole New Testament. And it is a very serious theme, solemn reading for the elect.

[1] Genesis xxii, 18.

GOD'S CHOICE OF MEN

God, in His wisdom, does make men to differ; they are not all created equal; He does choose particular men to particular positions of advantage; but it is with a view finally to the greatest good of all.

Why, if you study this doctrine of divine election not from human creeds or newspapers, but from the Bible, you will never suspect God of any unjust fondness toward the elect; you might sometimes find yourselves fearing that God discriminated unfairly against His elect, laying too much upon them, demanding too rigid an account from them. You might fear that He had dealt too harshly with His chosen people Israel. Of course that is not true, but it might seem so to us.

When we first opened our eyes to the facts of the world, those facts seemed to us grossly unfair —one born in a palace, one in a hovel; one growing up strong, another a helpless invalid; one in the radiance of the cross, another under the black shadow of a heathen idol. That was all that we could see, and to us it seemed grossly unfair. But the Bible shows us more than we could see—not everything; a thousand questions are still unanswered; but it does show how God is working all this toward a sublime fairness at the end in the greatest good of all; so that in the end, as Paul says, "there is no difference between the Jew and

the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." [1] They may not all enjoy the good, alas! for they may not all accept it; there is where the mystery of the human will comes in, with its possible refusal of God's goodness, and therefore ruin and tragedy. But so far as God's election is concerned, the Bible shows us how it is working toward the free and loving offer of the best good to all. So that it shall be to the greatest advantage of the whole world that Abraham was called, that Jacob was chosen, that Paul was elected, or you yourself to such advantages as God has given you, or I to such as He has given me.

Why, in your own body there is going on a constant process of divine election. Are all the parts and members of your body created equal? Can you see with your foot? Can you hear with your hand? Can you taste with your eyes? By no means. Each member is elected to some very peculiar power of sense or motion; but having been thus elected, each member must faithfully exercise that function for the good of the whole body, else it will become atrophied and reprobate. The eye must go on seeing, or it will lose the power to see. The hand must go on working, or its muscles will shrivel into helplessness. It is for the infinite advantage of the

[1] Romans x, 12.

whole, that God has chosen to give such difference of power and honor to all the several parts.

And so God has chosen to deal with us men and women, making us to differ. It is a sovereign choice, and all the political papers in the world cannot interfere with it. God has not created men equal; He has made them to differ; but for every differing advantage that He has chosen to confer upon any man, He will hold that man to a strict account. "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required"; and if Abraham, or Jacob, or Paul, or any other who has been elected to high office, fails to discharge its duties worthily, he or his elect descendants must be turned out, and some worthier put in his place. "God will let His vineyard to other husbandmen," our text said, "who will render Him the fruits in their season."

What a terribly practical doctrine this election is when you study it from the Bible! Men had treated it as a mere abstraction. Like good Calvinists we believe it, counting ourselves among the elect; or perhaps we deny it; but, either way, it is a matter of words with us, an abstract theory. But here is this unquestionable fact, that in a thousand ways you differ from your neighbor, being more highly favored than he. Who made you to differ, and why?

Why did God choose to give some of you more

money than He has given your neighbors? There was a certain poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury, and she has become a very popular character, and many of us are apt to talk complacently about our "mites." Softly, am I a poor widow? God has elected many of us to the privilege of dropping into His treasury on any one Sunday more money than that poor widow ever touched in all her life; and God will demand of them an accounting whether they have done it. When a Christian man holds money that honestly belongs to him, it ought to mean a greater advantage to the whole community, and to the cause of God, that that money has come to him, than if the same money had gone to any one else, or to some public treasury. An all-wise God has chosen this particular man to the office of purse-holder, and He chooses him for the benefit of all; and unless the all are benefited, there is something wrong with the office-holder. I wish we could learn to look upon our private property, if we have any, in this light, as one application of the great doctrine of divine election, one act of the God who maketh us to differ.

And so with any other distinguishing advantage —advantages of birth, of education, of artistic gift, of personal attractiveness, of social charm. A follower of Jesus will learn to value any such ad-

vantage as he is able to use it to make others happier or better; to brighten and sweeten and gladden this world in which we are appointed to live.

But most of all the advantages of a Christian faith itself; for that is the highest of all the privileges to which God elects men, that we should know Christ as our friend and Saviour, and that our sins have been forgiven for His sake; for we must be elected to such privilege; we do not deserve it.

But what were we so elected for?—in order that we might thank God for calling us in and shutting others out? No, no; God forbid; but that we ourselves might hasten out with all speed to draw the others in. "Let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come." The invitation reads for all. And you and I have been elected to the privilege of carrying it to all—to all, as many as we can reach and draw. "Bring them all in"; that is the official commission of every one of God's elect.

CHAPTER III

ONE CHOSEN FROM TWO ——

Genesis xxv, 34: "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

THE one standard illustration of the doctrine of God's choice of men is His preference of Jacob over Esau. Paul sets it before us in the most vivid way in words borrowed from the prophet Malachi: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." [1] He also sets this forward as the most staggering instance of such election, inasmuch as the choice was determined before the children were born. Men are apt to quote it in doctrinal discussion as the most conspicuous instance of arbitrary favoritism. Let us turn back to the original story, and see whether God's choice is there set forth as so unreasoning or unreasonable.

A good man, Isaac, had two sons. Esau, the elder, was the stronger, bolder, more attractive lad. Laughing at danger, he became a famous hunter. He was of generous impulses, and sure to be popular in any company. His father loved him, and was fond of him, and nothing tasted so good to the

[1] Romans ix, 13. Malachi i, 2.

old man as a savory bit of venison which his son Esau had caught and dressed.

Jacob, the younger son, was a very different character; naturally timid, inclined to be deceitful, selfish, scheming. He was not an amiable lad and not popular. His mother loved him, perhaps for the reason that no one else could. One knows how it is with mothers.

The difference between the boys comes out strikingly in the scene before us. One day Esau comes home from the hunt hungry and faint, for he had killed nothing that day. Jacob was cooking a mess of pottage, and it smelled wonderfully good to a hungry man. "Serve me some," says Esau. And Jacob—here was his chance, a chance he had long been waiting for. He had never forgiven his brother for coming into the world a few minutes ahead. He longed himself to stand as his father's heir, to step at last into his father's place, and carry on the family line and inherit the family blessing. So he says, "Let me have your birthright, and you shall have my pottage."

What a man! A more generous fellow, Esau himself, I think, would have made place at the table for his worst enemy, if he had seen him so nearly dead of hunger. But that was not Jacob's way of doing business. Here was a good chance for driving a bargain, and he would make the most

of it. So he stirs the pot to let a little more of the fragrance escape into the air, and says softly, "Let me have your birthright, and you shall have all the pottage you want."

And Esau said—Jacob knew his brother well enough to guess that this was what he would say—"Give me the pottage; what good will the birthright do me if I starve to death?" And then Jacob smiled a little to himself, as he helped his brother to all that he could eat; the costliest dish of soup that any man in this world ever sat down to. But Esau did not think much about it; he despised his birthright. "What does it amount to, anyway?" he thought; "Father Isaac may outlive both of us."

It is a very unpleasant scene; Esau does not appear well, and Jacob cuts a very poor figure—worse than Esau, I thought, when I first read the story. Yet, on second thought, there is one good thing about that younger brother—he wanted that birthright. He would do anything, fair or foul, to get it; but with all his soul he wanted it. If once it could be his, would he sell it for a dish of soup? If you could have starved Jacob for a thousand years, and then tempted him with the richest feast ever spread on earth, and said coaxingly, "May I have your birthright now, if I give you all this?" the starving man, too weak to speak, would have found strength enough, somehow, to shake his head,

"No." And yet this birthright, what was it?—a name, a hope, a word—what was it? As old Falstaff in the play said about a soldier's honor: "Can it mend a broken leg or an arm, or take away the pain of a wound? What is honor? Air." What was this birthright?—air. No one could put his hand on it, or feel it, or smell it; it was just a hope; that was all—an idea. It was something that would concern the man's descendants, after he was dead, more than himself. It was one of the invisible things of life; but Jacob had fixed his eyes on that birthright, and endured as seeing it. Esau was hungry and wanted something solid to eat, and he despised his birthright and sold it. Jacob took the meanest possible way of getting what he wanted; but what he wanted was really a good thing. And there must be something good in the nature of any man or child who wanted a good thing so much.

You may see this same pair of brothers to-day starting out side by side into all sorts of enterprises. Here in America Jacob goes to school probably; certainly Esau does. Father Isaac will be sure to save up money enough to send Esau to school, and to college, too. But Jacob—Isaac had not thought of sending him to college; but somehow, by hook or crook, the boy gets there. But nobody takes much note of him at first. Esau is the man. What a popular fellow! bold, strong,

picked out as a promising candidate for an athletic team the first day the trainer gets his eye on him. Such a voice for singing, such natural fire of oratory, such dramatic genius! And as to studies, a dozen persons will tell you that Esau might head the class if he cared to try. And then such generous impulses! Money—the richest men in the college cannot fling money around with such lordly prodigality. He will always stand his turn at treating—even if his landlady should have to wait a year or two for her bill, and if Father Isaac should have to put another mortgage on the homestead. A splendid fellow, this Esau; everybody likes him; yes, even his landlady does, and Father Isaac.

He cuts a great figure in the class, Esau does, Freshman year. Sophomore year—why, somehow you do not hear so much about Esau as you did a year ago. And Junior, Senior year—he is not in college now. Nobody knows exactly what has become of him; some one thinks he is working on a farm, and another has heard that he is a clerk in a store, and the next man thinks he is dead. He has not turned out as he promised. He had no staying power. It was not in him to keep going. He was no student, of course; but even in the boat he pulled better when it was not a race, and on the ball-field he showed off better when it was not a game. The real trouble with Esau was always that

he despised his birthright. What birthright? Any birthright—any of these invisible things, these future ideal advantages. They seemed pleasant enough to talk about, and to imagine that you were going to have them some day, but Esau could never take any real trouble day after day to get them. When he was downright hungry, he would sell any one of them for a mess of pottage. "What is the use of studying this evening, when so much fun is going?" "What is the use of keeping up training week after week through the term, when there are so many good things to eat and drink and smoke?" "What is the use pinching myself to economize, when it is so easy—at first—to borrow money or run up a bill?" And so Esau comes to grief before the course is half over, and finds no place of repentance, for all his tears. The college world knows him no more.

But poor little Jacob—how the big brother used to laugh at him for his petty grinding ways! He could scarcely speak to a dozen people without blushing and stammering, or walk without stumbling, or learn a lesson without digging at it all the morning.

A few years ago there was one of these unpromising lads at one of our colleges, who was so awkward on his feet that all his classmates fell laughing at him the first time they saw him try to

run. It provoked the boy. He made up his mind that he would take possession of that particular birthright, and before he graduated he was the champion short-distance runner of the college. As to studying, almost every year, as Commencement approaches, you will hear the college discussing whether Jacob—or rather which Jacob—will take the highest honors this year; it is never Esau.

Jacob once entered the English House of Commons, and essayed his maiden speech; but he spoke so awkwardly that the whole House was overcome, and fairly laughed him down; but not till he had said through his set teeth, "I will make you listen to me before I am through." And he kept his word; he was a lineal descendant of the old Jacob, and bore his name, Disraeli, till he changed it for that of Beaconsfield, Prime Minister of England.

If a friend of yours were going to college you would not advise him to copy Jacob in all things. God grant him a more generous example! But, at all events, he must not copy Esau. Jacob, with all his faults, will come out so far ahead of the brother who despised his birthright. Tell the boy that he must be sure to find out what the college birthright is, that invisible future something for which it was worth while to go to college at all. Make up your mind to have that thing, and go hungry and faint and tired, if you must, but never let go of it. There

are frequent messes of pottage on every table in a college town, but they come too high when they cost you the birthright of your education.

But these two boys finish their student days after a while and go into something else. Perhaps they go into business. Jacob is apt to go into business. He has always had a genius for trading. He was always good at a bargain. Esau found it so, and Laban found it so. And in later days, in the middle ages, when modern commerce and banking were beginning in Europe, and Jacob showed his face at the market-place, you will remember how those brave feudal nobles, who had to bargain with him, did not like the Jew much. They despised his petty, huckstering ways, fine, big, bold, free-hearted Esaus that they were. Read your "Merchant of Venice," and see what the European gentlemen of those days thought of this Jacob Shylock. But though these Esaus were very strong, and made the laws, and carried the sword, and had little scruple about using it, Jacob's genius at trading was too much for them all. Many a gay young spendthrift of a nobleman got his mess of pottage, but it was Jacob who kept the birthright. By some means Jacob always had the money to lend, and other people did the borrowing.

And so the system of modern banking grew up, and all the commerce of our modern world. People

do not always like Jacob's ways in business, but the point to be noted is that Jacob himself will never sell his birthright for a mess of pottage. We are not apologizing for any of his sharp practices, but we are talking about the failure that the other brother made of his business chances, the more attractive brother Esau. He was a nobler character in some respects, but he was what the New Testament calls a profane person; that is, he was fickle, impulsive, shallow; a man who would let present pleasure draw his thoughts away from solid future advantage; a man who could not bear present inconvenience or pain for the sake of future honor. He will often promise great things in business, as he did in school; he is bold, he is generous and popular, he plays for large stakes, and at first seems likely to win; people call him the young Napoleon of finance, and he looks down on little Jacob, with his patience, and economy, and sleepless watchfulness, and accurate calculation. But the story goes on telling itself over and over: how to-day Esau eats his mess of pottage, and to-morrow is left hungry again; while Jacob can hardly remember whether he is hungry or not, but he gets and keeps the birthright.

And now for the more religious application of the story of these two brothers. The same thing that made Esau a brilliant failure as heir to his

father's earthly inheritance, made him a failure as heir to his father's faith. I dare say in this matter also he was a brilliant failure, very promising at first. When the boys began to go to Sunday-school (if there had been a Sunday-school) I suppose people would have called Esau the more hopeful Bible scholar at first; if a young people's meeting had been started in their chapel just after Melchizedek or some other evangelist had been laboring among them, I can imagine that Esau gave the more interesting testimony at first, offered the more fervent prayers, and left poor little Jacob quite out of sight in the matter of singing. There is an air of freedom and boldness about this youth which is very taking. He belongs to the class of hearers whom our Lord afterward described in one of his parables, who are like a certain kind of soil where the good seed fell, and immediately sprang up quickly. But you remember why it sprang up quickly—because there was no deepness of earth. There was no root to that part of the crop; the growth was all above ground. If Esau ever had any religious fervor, I am sure it was of that sort. When persecution and tribulation came because of the word, at once he was offended. When keeping the birthright of the faith meant to go faint and hungry, at once he complained that he was starving, and so snatched for the earthly pottage.

But Jacob—whatever befell, Jacob was determined to have that birthright, his father's faith. How much he supposed it meant, in those early days, I do not know. Really it would mean infinitely much. His father Isaac's faith, Abraham's faith—it would mean that Jacob's descendants should be God's chosen people and heirs of God's promises; it would mean that the Saviour of the world should be born among them after many years, through whom the cherished birthright, an eternal inheritance, might be offered to all the children of men. But how much of all that Jacob was thinking of, or had ever dreamed of, at the time when he sold this pottage to Esau, I do not know. Not much, I fancy, or he could not well have taken such crooked means as he took to get it; nevertheless that birthright, as an idea, a name, the family honor, the father's blessing, the first place in the family estate—it did represent the highest thing those two boys knew about, and while Esau despised it, Jacob set his heart on having it.

Well, when any child or man sets his heart on having the highest thing he knows about, and is willing to toil and wait and suffer and go hungry and cold—anything, rather than lose it—he may not know much about high things yet, and there may still be many mean streaks left in his character, but it seems to me he has got his face turned

toward being a Christian. And if that is the way he is looking, and he does really keep his face set that way, it seems to me that God will lead him on at last to the point where we can unhesitatingly call him a Christian. Just as God led this Jacob on, and chastened him, and humbled him, and wrestled with him, through many years, till at last the man could offer that sublime prayer of the later chapter: "Tell me thy name. I will not let thee go except thou bless me."[1] Jacob was a new man then, and deserved his new name as one of God's elect; but he had taken his first step that way long years before, when he chose the unseen birthright of his father's blessing rather than the pottage or any other present pleasure. Already he was the sort of man that God chooses: "Jacob have I loved"—not Esau, Jacob.

Do you think now that this standard biblical instance of God's choice of men is so arbitrary, after all, or so unreasoning or unreasonable? At all events, God does so choose men. And when the highest birthright is set before us—Christ's offer of an inheritance among the sons of God, that which He gave His life to purchase for us—and many a promising Esau is drawn toward it—for it is inevitable that he should be—the heroism of Christian service appeals to every generous impulse

[1] Genesis xxxii, 26–28.

of the soul, and Esau was full of generous impulses; but here is some dish of pottage temptingly near, and he makes the great refusal. And what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world? The whole round world would be like a mess of pottage, tasting good for a moment, but leaving you hungry forevermore, if it should cost you your birthright as a child of God. The man who despises his birthright cannot be named among God's elect.

That is the lesson taught for all time to come by this standard scriptural instance of divine election, God's choice of Jacob over Esau.

CHAPTER IV

ONE CHOSEN FROM A HUNDRED

Luke xv, 4: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

We are apt to read this parable as showing the contrast between righteous people and sinners, and that Christ would care for sinners—which is true. But the parable also shows the contrast between the ninety and nine and the one, and that Christ would care for the one and choose the one. But it is in Christ that we learn most clearly what it is possible to know concerning God; therefore Christ's way of choosing men gives us our surest knowledge of God's methods of election.

Some, when they are choosing, care only for quantity; Christ cared for quality. Some preachers would not trouble themselves to do good work except for great congregations. This preacher did some of his best work for eleven men sitting at a table, or three men on a mountain, or one man who had come to Him at night, or one woman at a well, or two sisters in their Bethany home; and of

those two sisters, Martha was careful and troubled about ninety and nine things; Mary could care for one thing, and Jesus commended Mary.

The text sets before us the individualism of the Gospel. Of course there may be a false individualism which is essentially selfish, and therefore most unchristian; it is the individualism of the man who tries to put himself up on the throne and to make all things in heaven and on earth serve him. Christianity teaches a man rather to deny himself, and make himself the servant of all. The ideals of our modern social reformers, who would have each citizen forget himself and work for the elevation of all his kind, come very near to Christ's teaching. There is a reason for it that so many of the extremest socialists, however they may denounce the organized Christian Church, yet claim that Christ himself was one of their sort, a socialist. They are not altogether mistaken; many of the things that the socialists insist on most earnestly, He also insisted on. For some parts of His teaching there is no better interpreter than a thoughtful socialist. He did renounce His own individual exaltation that He might make himself the servant of all. He, though rich, did become poor, that we all through His poverty might be rich. He, though Son of God, was in all things made like unto us, His brethren. What more could any socialist ask of

Jesus? Are they not right in claiming Him as carrying out their programme to the utmost, himself a thoroughly consistent socialist?

True; but there is another side of Christ's teaching which we forget at our peril. If Jesus Christ was more generously social than any other socialist, He was also more intensely individualistic than any other individualist. While others were content with the ninety and nine, He was always looking out for the one. Others wanted the biggest flock; He cared as much to have the most perfect sheep. No matter how great the crowd, Christ's interest was always fastening itself to individuals in the crowd; and the effect of His teaching was to round out each individual to the utmost that was in him. Christ himself was interested in individuals, and He knew how to make each individual interesting.

The great revivals of Christianity have always picked individual men and women out of the mass, and made them individually interesting. It was so at the beginning. The oldest civilizations of the world had treated a common man as if he existed only for the sake of the state; that was their theory, I mean. Not that the people always lived up to it, for no doubt there was plenty of disloyal selfishness even then; but the theory treated a common man as existing only for the sake of the state. But

Christianity from the first taught each poor slave and outcast that he for himself was infinitely interesting to God. The Good Shepherd was content to leave everything and go far into the mountains, if He might find this one sheep that had gone astray. And this most intense individualism was a large part of the message of Christianity to the Greek, and to the Roman, and also to the Jew, of the first century.

So, again, at the Reformation, private Christians had been almost lost sight of in the imposing organization of the Church. Except through the Church, it seemed that God himself could hardly hear the cry of any one poor sinner. The Reformers' message to the Europe of the sixteenth century was that the cry of that one poor sinner was exactly what God was listening for. Ninety and nine bishops, priests, and deacons safe up in the fold of the Church were not so sure of interesting the Master as this one poor wandering elect soul outside. The great problem of salvation must concern that one by himself alone, that one and God. That was the substance of the doctrine of the Protestant Reformation.

So, again, the English Puritan of the seventeenth century, and his brother in New England. I need not remind you of their intense individualism. They taught each man to deal for himself with God.

So Wesley and his followers in the eighteenth century, each of them finding the Holy Spirit in his own soul; always pressing on their hearers the fateful question, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

People often complain of the Methodists and Evangelicals of those days because of a certain appearance of selfishness in their doctrine. It may be so, but I have been naming all the great Christian revivals down through the ages. Whenever this religion of Christ has begun to stir the world with extraordinary power, it has taught men once more to go with the Good Shepherd who could almost forget the flock because He cared so much for the sheep; who could leave the ninety and nine while He went for the one. This is a characteristic of Christianity from the beginning; therefore, when men tell me that Jesus was a good socialist, I agree in a way, but I try not to forget that, nevertheless, for nineteen hundred years He has been teaching the world its lessons of most tremendous individualism. And any socialism that leaves out that side of His character and teaching may become in the last degree unchristian, antichristian. We talk of the antichrist; but John says, "Even now there are many antichrists;"[1] and surely in our day

[1] I John ii, 18.

one of them is that selfish individualism which would sacrifice the whole world for its own private enjoyment; but I think another of them is that more insidious kind of selfishness, which boasts itself social, but despises individuals, and forgets that any one humble neighbor has something in him which could not be paid for by the price of the whole world. An opponent of present styles of architecture might complain that a sky-scraping apartment house offers a singular illustration of both these forms of the antichrist; both the selfish individualism which would exalt itself regardless of a whole neighborhood's discomfort, and also the false collectivism which obliterates for its own tenants the sacred boundaries of the individual home.

Let us look now at this second antichrist, this false and mutilated collectivism or socialism, for it is one of the great perils of our day. I am not talking merely of the form of opinion which calls itself socialism, but of all the tendencies and influences which are likely to suppress the individual man, robbing him of what should be worth more to him than all the world beside.

The most vivid illustration of such suppression of individualism comes from the spectacle which has often been forced upon us, and always fills us with shame and distress—the spectacle of a mob at

a lynching; for this is the act of a crowd always, not of an individual. A lynching is the ninety and nine attacking the one. Those ninety and nine together do things that no one of them could bring himself to do alone. America is almost the only country in the world where deliberate torture survives as a regular institution. I say "regular," for enough of these lynchings occur every year to make a kind of rule. America is the only country in the world to-day where men are regularly condemned to be burned alive. The most despicable tyrant of the East does not manifest such awful cruelty as is shown regularly at an American lynching, when the ninety and nine throw themselves upon the one.

This means that, viewed as a question of morals, the damage done to that one victim may be less alarming than the damage done to each of the ninety and nine. The mob kills that one victim cruelly, and there is an end; but the mob robs each of its own members of every vestige of moral discrimination, every trace of individual courage, dignity, pity, till you have a herd of cowardly and bloodthirsty maniacs, with their incredible ferocity. And it is all because each member of that reprobate company has lost his own proper individualism, and surrendered himself to the fatal frenzy of the mob. If you should take the very worst of those

men by himself and put him in a magistrate's chair, so as to force upon him some sense of his individual responsibility, and then bring this same suspect before him for sentence, would he condemn him to be burned alive? No American magistrate has done that. I will not believe that a single American could be found who would be capable of more fiendish cruelty than the Tartar or the Turk—not if you give his individual manhood a chance; but let him lose himself with ninety-eight others, and you see what we have seen. Now, that is the socialistic principle run mad, this particular antichrist.

A mob at a lynching is the most awful manifestation of this kind of degeneracy, but by no means the only manifestation of it. Here is a company of boys at college tempted to condone or commit acts of dishonesty in the classroom, or dishonor on the playground, or cowardly blackguardism toward one unpopular newcomer, because that has been the college sentiment. Each is tempted to accept the college sentiment, and surrender his own proper individual manliness to this collective unmanliness of the ninety-nine.

Here is a company of business men on Wall Street, or of politicians in the City Hall or the Capitol, each of them a man whom you would be glad to know if you could catch him alone. But

put ninety-nine of them together; let them pool the moral issues, each surrendering his own individual conscience to the keeping of the crowd; you know that a crowd of politicians or traders sometimes become only less demoralized and demoralizing than a mob at a lynching. There is almost nothing that they will not do to gain their end. This is one chief peril connected with the immense aggregations of capital seen in our day. What has become of the individual man, and his individual principle? He himself has lost sight of it, and does not know where to look for it again. The business may prosper; the business may be gaining the whole world, and the man gets his good share of the gain, but meanwhile he has lost himself. And in the long run that loss proves too great for the whole world to pay for.

Precisely the same is true of the aggregations of labor. In olden times a workman stood out by himself; standing alone, he was very helpless, and his conditions might sometimes be hard and perilous; but at the worst he was an individual man, and any good shepherd who went to look for him knew when he had found him. Now, in many branches of industry, these individuals, where are they? They are not to be found at all; you must deal with the entire ninety and nine together. And we cannot deny that this association of workmen

has accomplished some great benefits; I believe it has been controlled in part by the very spirit of the Christ; but we are looking now at this other side of it, this insidious spirit of antichrist which is always threatening to invade these larger companies of men, whoever they are, robbing them of their individual character, enslaving them, bringing them under a new tyranny. And often for the workman this new tyranny proves to be more cruel and more demoralizing than the old. When unprincipled men have seized the reins of power in some labor organization, how often the unhappy workman has confessed under his breath—for he dares not say it aloud—that he could wish himself back in the old days when he could deal with his employer for himself. He has lost himself, and the whole labor world cannot make that loss good.

Oh, from how many sides the truth is forced in upon us that the machinery of popular government never insures liberty; that it may bring a new slavery; that the tyranny of a whole people may become more cruel and more destructive of manhood than that of a king.

Look at the tyranny of fashion: those evil customs of dress and bearing and entertainment for which no individual will confess himself responsible; but the ninety and nine have decreed them. and

no one ventures to say Nay. It is another illustration of this sort of antichristian socialism.

This, then, is to be recognized as one of the peculiar moral perils of our age, and of our land, for the reason that we have dethroned the king, and in every department of life have professed to enthrone the people. We learn from so many instances, and by so many proofs, that the people may be a worse tyrant than the king. The king was far away; he would have touched us, and cramped our manhood, only at two or three points; the people—we are of the people; the pressure comes from every side; and if we yield to it, it may appear soon that no true unconstrained individual manhood will be left to us. Look once more at that mob at a lynching, and remember that it is one of the characteristic developments of this country of popular rule, and you see this particular kind of antichrist full-grown.

Now, against the antichrist we must set the Christ —the Christ whose habit it was to leave the ninety and nine and seek the one till He had found him. Never has there been a time when human society has needed more than it needs now this patient inquisition of the Good Shepherd, the chooser of the one sheep.

Call back the old faith in God's choice—a faith which made men strong and brave against the old

tyranny—and see if it may not have power to emancipate us from these new tyrannies. Calvin himself, teacher of the doctrine of election, was the champion of the individual.[1] Our Christ is a lover of men; not of classes, or of masses, but of men. He is interested in men one by one; and unless they judge themselves unworthy of His choice, He can make them one by one interesting.

One elect man can often save the day. One man whom Christ chooses outweighs the ninety and nine. One such man at a lynching will sometimes exorcise that gang of cowardly maniacs, and make men of them all. In the councils of labor or of capital, one elect man, or two or three of them, will sometimes order the confusion, and save the day for truth and honesty. In college, one Christian lad; in society, one Christian woman, repudiating any and all of its unholy dictates; anywhere, one whom Christ has chosen may be enough to save the day.

This doctrine of God's choice is full of hope, therefore; for, after all, the ninety and nine are made of units, each capable of individual election. The entire mob tyranny might be disintegrated, if

[1] "Calvin, under a militant form of doctrine, lifted the individual above pope, and prelate, and priest, and presbyter; above Catholic Church and General Synod; above indulgences, remissions, and absolutions from fellow mortals, and brought him into the immediate dependence on God."—Bancroft's History of the United States, vol. i, p. 180.

one were chosen to make the start. The Christ who found the one sheep, may find the others one by one. That is the nature of Christianity, to find men one by one. So it makes its choice of men—not the ninety and nine, but the one.

CHAPTER V

A CALL FOR ALL

THE previous chapters have given such instances of God's call as prove it to be particular and personal. The elect person is one chosen from two, or one chosen from a hundred; the choice is of the one. But in that case we are apt to argue that the other person—or the ninety and nine others—must be left unchosen. So the doctrine of reprobation has been a common corollary by the human reason to the revealed doctrine of election. To the mind the logic of that corollary may seem unquestionable, and yet the Christian heart has always questioned it, and seems ready now to repudiate it. That God has specially chosen some, must not be taken to prove that He had no care for the others. Why should He not be specially choosing them also, one by one, each to some appointed calling? "Talents differ," as Emerson's squirrel says to the mountain; "all is well and wisely put. If I cannot carry forests on my back, neither can you crack a nut." Reprobation is not true to the total impression of Scripture, and even the great creeds have

shrunk from any clear formulation of it, though some of them affirm it. For there runs through the whole Scripture a tone of universality as clear as that other tone of particularism. The harmony of these two tones constitutes the music of our Christian faith. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Therefore, to do justice to the scriptural treatment of our theme, I must now supplement those earlier particularistic chapters by one which shall ring the changes on the word "all." [1]

So large a word as this may properly claim a double text, and I will take the question of the young ruler in Matthew xix, 20, "What lack I yet?" and our Lord's invitation in Matthew xi, 28, "All ye that labor and are heavy laden."

There are many kinds of people in the world, but they are always tending to range themselves in two groups. In politics you discover an almost infinite variety of opinion, yet in every great election you expect to find just two chief parties. For the industrial interests it seems almost inevitable that men should be drawn into one or the other of the two great hosts of capital and labor. If you were speaking of matters of fashion, or of general opin-

[1] "They (Calvinism and Arminianism) together give origin to the blended strain from which issues the perfect music which utters the perfect truth."—Dr. A. A. Hodge, Popular Lectures on Theological Themes, p. 161.

ion, this man will be called conservative, and that man progressive, for you expect every man to wear one or the other of the two titles. So one finds everywhere this tendency toward an arrangement of people into two groups, and to name these two would be a sufficient suggestion of all.

We may expect to find the same thing true of religion, or of the attitude of men toward religion. It is generally agreed that all men ought to take some attitude toward religion. Man may be called a religious animal as truly as he is a thinking, or working, or political animal. One of the universal human instincts remains unsatisfied until it finds some sort of religious satisfaction; that is to say, all men have some sort of religious need, but what sort of need is it? Well, if you try to answer that question for the people about you, you are apt to find them once more settling into just two groups, and groups so very different that one might think there must be two religions to serve for these two sorts of people. I have taken two texts to match these two sorts of people.

A representative of one of them speaks to us in the person of the young ruler. "What lack I yet?" he says. It was a young man of honorable position, large wealth, amiable and admirable character; a man who had done much, but still wanted to do more. A consciousness of past achievement

and of present unused power speaks through his lips. He had kept the commandments, or thought he had, so far as he knew them, but he was not ready to stop with that. "What lack I yet?" he asks. He seemed aware of gifts not yet fully utilized, powers not yet fully put into action, so he asks: "What other good things remain for me to do? Where is some farther goal for me to aim at? some higher mountain to climb? some larger world to conquer? some fiercer enemy to fight? something more to do?" It is the voice of youthful hope, energy, enthusiasm, aspiration.

And that is always a pleasant voice to hear. The speaker is generally somewhat youthful, not always over-wise. Older friends shake their heads and smile at that easy self-confidence. To some of us his past achievements may not seem so complete as they had seemed to him. And if the young man had known himself better, and had known the commandments of the law better, he would not have said off-hand, "I have kept them all from my youth." There is a freshness in him which starts a smile, but not an unfriendly smile; such freshness is very refreshing, we should be sorry to have him lose it. That same hopeful enthusiasm of his will have to furnish a large part of the motive-power of human progress.

While he was a boy this impulse showed itself in

his sports; always he wanted something more to do, something harder to do. Whenever a boy comes to be content with any established athletic record, his own or any other's, it shows that the sporting instinct has begun to decay in him; there ought to be still hope of bettering the record. "What lack I yet? How can I get another fifth of a second off the time? how can I add another quarter of an inch to the jump? at what point can I force myself on a hair's-breadth farther toward ideal perfection?" That is what they are all asking; it is the consciousness of a power that has not yet been fully utilized. "What lack I yet?"

Strange forms this impulse takes sometimes as the boy grows older—tragical forms sometimes; you have the young knight-errant of chivalry riding about the world, searching through all the tournaments for some stronger antagonist to kill, or be killed by. In our day the same man would be risking his own and his fellow's lives trying to get a mile or two nearer the Pole, or a thousand feet higher up the mountain. I heard of a famous Alpine climber who was riding out from Zermatt some years ago, having finished his work there for the summer, for he had risked his life on every mountain in the neighborhood and had conquered them all, and therefore had packed up and was now going home. But on his way down the valley

word reached him that, the day before, a rival climber had reached the top of the Weisshorn by a new and more perpendicular route, never before dreamed of. "Halt!" says the man, "off with my trunks!" He would not leave Zermatt till he had made that new ascent too, or else left his body at the bottom of it. "What lack I yet?" So soon as you show such a man anything that he lacks, any possibility along his chosen line which he has not yet attained, off he starts instantly.

But suppose the climber should put his foot on the highest point of the Himalayas; suppose the voyager should plant his flag at the very centre of the North Pole, will that satisfy him? No, no; still he comes back, asking, "What other good thing shall I do?" He is still hungry for achievement; it is an infinite appetite. Tell him of some height still better worth climbing; some truth better worth learning; some enemy better worth fighting; some friend better worth loving. And so at last such a man turns directly toward God. He cannot stop short of God. Can the infinite Creator himself give this energetic creature of His something better worth doing than the creature has yet discovered for himself, something that would make his life thoroughly worth while? That is the impulse, I am sure, which turns many inquirers toward religion; certainly that was the impulse which sent

the rich young ruler running toward Jesus. "What is it that I lack?" he cried; "show me how to do the good thing that I have not yet done."

Now Christianity has its answer ready for that sort of inquirers; but before asking what its answer may be, I should like first to turn your thoughts toward the other group—the opposite group; for there is another, and it is very different. The first group were conscious of more power to be used; this second group are conscious of weakness; the first group bring a record of past achievements, this second a memory of past failures; the first are looking for harder tasks to utilize their strength, this second are looking for help in tasks that have already proven too hard for them. So the others wanted work, but these cry for rest; the others were hopeful, these are discouraged. "Where is someone worthy of my love?" asked the others. "Where is anyone who will love me?" ask these.

The first were young in years or in spirit, for anyone in the position of that rich young ruler is apt to grow old rather slowly. But this second class were never young; even if not many years have yet passed over their heads, they are prematurely aged. Walk through the streets of any great city, and you will see little creatures, not yet in their teens, whose faces show the ugly marks of decrepitude. The struggle and burden of life have

been so hard to them, wearing them out before they had fairly begun to live. The others are in some sense a leisure class, for they are always waiting for more to do; these are the laboring class, for their work has always been a tax on them, exhausting them, breaking them down. If life means unlimited resources to the others, to these it has meant hopeless debt. But these also turn to religion. Their need often drives them there. "Is there anywhere a bountiful Creator who can supply such cruel need?" That is their question. Is there anywhere a compassionate Saviour who can pity them in their failure and helplessness? some divine friend who can love them even after temptation and hardship have crushed all loveliness out of them?

Now one might think that a religion fitted for these of the second group must be very different from a religion which should suit the first. Give us different temples, we say, for these two groups, with different gods. If we had lived back in the time of the old pagans we might send the first group to some temple of Hercules, where they should learn how to follow the mighty champion step by step in his arduous labors. But this other company—no temple of Hercules for them. Let us find for them some being of infinite pity, like the Hindoo Buddha, that gentle prince whose heart

was broken for the hopeless sorrows and burdens of his people. Little enough the prince had to offer his people, for the real Buddhism was a religion without God or hope. But the sincerity of the Buddha's compassion, even now after all these four-and-twenty centuries, makes his name a power for hundreds of millions of our fellow-men. This is the other group of religious inquirers, the people whose infinity of pain or guilt or need has turned them toward a compassionate deliverer.

Well, now, having described these two groups of religious inquirers, we are ready to ask whether any one religion can answer the inquiry for them both. Can our religion do it? Has Christianity an answer for them both? Has Christ an answer for them both? Yes, or at least He offered to answer them both; for it is matter of history that both these sorts of people were drawn toward Jesus Christ and welcomed by Him. That rich young ruler, everyone has heard how he was drawn toward Jesus. "He came running to Him." And young people of that same age and temper and condition still come running toward the Christian religion, many of them with the same eager impetuosity, because they feel that it will show them some life worth living, some work worth doing, some goal worth reaching, some truth worth hearing, some enemy worth fighting, some friend worth

loving. Our schools and colleges are full of such seekers after God; it is they who come as candidates before our missionary societies; they gather every year in Northfield Conferences, and at other like places of assembly. You will find among them many a hero of the boat and the athletic field, young men with the physique and spirit of a Hercules, who have broken many a record already, but are not satisfied. Their hearts tell them that they have not yet found the thing quite worthy of them, and so they turn at last toward religion. "All these things have I done," they say; "what lack I yet? What is the better thing that remains for me to do?"

Now we have in the Gospel the record of Christ's answer to such an inquirer. And first one must notice how it says that "Jesus loved him." An inquirer of that sort was welcomed with the utmost cordiality; and such inquirers always should be so welcomed by any true church of Jesus Christ. But then Jesus went on to say to this young man: "One thing you have not done: you have not yet used that wealth of yours for the needs of your fellowmen; that is the one condition unfulfilled by you. Do that, and I will let you come with me." But at that saying the young man went away sorrowful. It appeared that that stint was too hard even for him; those large possessions of his were golden

fetters upon his limbs; and when he tried, he found he had not strength enough to break them. He went away sorrowful. And so, when this same young man came back to Jesus a second time, after a little —if he did, and I like to believe that he did, and at all events many like him have come back a second time—he had then lost some of that first foolish self-confidence. Now he was not saying, "Show me some harder thing to do," but he was saying, "Help me, Lord, to do the thing that has been shown me." And so soon as that cry for help was heard and answered, then the man was ready for the career God made him for. Now a task had been given him worthy of his very highest aspiration; and also a Master to guide him and strengthen him in the doing of that task.

That is what the Christian religion stands ready to do for all honest inquirers of this first group. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." Of course it does not mean always that a man should literally part company with all his wealth, for, indeed, many of these young inquirers have no wealth to part with; but it means, consecrate this unexhausted strength of yours to the service of the needy world around you. Use it for lightening your neighbors' heavy loads, brightening their dark paths, cheering their sad and lonely hearts. You chivalrous young knight, scouring the

world for some doughtier champion to battle with, or some more slippery mountain to climb, or some other Quixotic and wasteful enterprise to undertake, why not throw yourself into the hard task of purifying the politics in your city ward?—that is one Gospel message; or of turning that pestilential block of tenements into a playground for the children of the neighborhood? or of creating a Christian atmosphere for the young clerks connected with your business; really giving your life to this thing, subordinating all your own pleasures and ambitions to it, and all this in obedient imitation of Him who gave His life on Calvary?

There is the stint which the Christian religion sets you; and when you have honestly tried that stint, and found how infinitely hard it is, and how weak you are, then you will be turning back to the Lord with a more humbled and chastened spirit to ask His help in the doing of it. Oh, but if it is hard, it is well worth while; it is the one thing that would make life worth living; it is the one labor worthy of a man. This Christian religion which sets such tasks is the right religion for this first group of inquirers.

But now how about the second group—those who had come not with a profession of unused strength, but with a cry of pain and need and failure and hopelessness? Is this same Christian religion fitted

for them? Why, yes; that is, if it is the religion of Christ; for you remember our other text, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One and the same Master, one and the same religion, suited for the leisure class who want more to do, and for the laboring class who are tired out and want a chance to rest. One religion for both. But have you noticed the strange word that Jesus puts into His invitation to those heavy-laden laborers—the word "yoke"? "Take my yoke upon you," He says. In other words, He rests them by putting a yoke upon them, a yoke that will make all their work easy and all their burdens light. And you know this means the yoke of kindly services toward others. Jesus will teach these weary victims of toil—and how many of them have learned the lesson and blessed Him for it!—that, by kindly helping others, they may find strength enough and to spare for their own heavy burdens; by cheering others in sorrow, they may find their own sorrowing hearts comforted; in the act of forgiving others, they find their own sins forgiven; in loving others, they themselves grow lovable to God and men. So the rest which Jesus promises to all who are weary and heavy laden is not at all a sluggish idleness and stupor; but He puts His own yoke upon them, they learn of Him, and then those heaviest burdens grow

easier to bear, and the weariest souls grow rested and strong. Dr. Lyman Abbott has said that "it is because the Christian religion professes to be able to satisfy these two passionate desires of the human soul—the desire for peace and the desire for achievement—that it possesses the attraction which the failures and the folly of its adherents may diminish, but cannot destroy." [1]

So this same religion is well suited to both sorts of inquirers—all sorts of inquirers who are ready to be taught of God. This call summons them all. They may come up by different paths, but the same Master stands ready to welcome and satisfy them all. They may come from different quarters, but it is to the same Temple; the New Jerusalem opens its gates on every side, east, north, south, west, that whoever comes may, if he will, walk straight forward into the city; the strong, the weak, the hopeful, the discouraged, those at leisure looking for work, those worked out and looking for rest, the young, the old. The same Lord invites them all.

And when they accept the invitation, He brings them all into one and the same fellowship in himself. Underneath their manifold diversities He brings to light a deeper unity among them. Indeed, under His leadership we often see their several positions strangely interchanged; the young man

[1] The Christian Ministry, p. 66.

boastful of his strength is set a task which makes him confess his weakness and cry for help; the old man, bewailing his weakness, is given a yoke which makes him strong to serve; the wise are shown hard lessons that someone must teach them; and babes are shown other lessons that they can teach. So the saying holds good, that "the first shall be last, and the last first"; but, first and last, they all alike find just what they need in Him; He is "the Saviour of all men," "able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him."

Every Christian preacher must long for words fit to express the boundless hospitality of his message. "Come, each of you," that is his message, "Come, all of you. Ho, everyone that thirsteth. Whatever you are thirsting for, whatever the need of your soul. Is it for work, or for rest? for help, or for someone whom you can help? for forgiveness, or for grace to forgive? for someone to love, or for someone to love you? Whatever you are thirsting for, ho, everyone that thirsteth, come!"

"Everyone," "all"—those words must never be omitted, if you would do justice to the scriptural doctrine of God's election of men.

CHAPTER VI

BEGGING OFF

So far we have been searching the Scriptures to learn how God chooses and calls men; it is time now that we look at the question from the other side, and ask how men respond to the call.

The present chapter will give three scriptural instances of men who, hearing the call, were inclined at first to offer excuses for not obeying it; and the three excuses here offered may stand as samples of all the varying excuses ever offered for disobedience. The first is found in Jeremiah i, 6: "Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." It is the excuse of immaturity. Let me say at the outset that this cry from the lips of the young prophet gives us a somewhat favorable opinion of him. How often one wishes that some of the noisy and precocious little people of modern times could keep still long enough to consider how young they really are, and how little they really know! As excuses go, this excuse was a good one. But the Lord would not admit it; for it happened that in this particular

case a modest, childlike soul was the very thing needed.

The excuse of immaturity might be offered either for one's self or for others. In the Gospel story we read how one day certain small children had been brought to our Lord, and His mature followers, supposing the immaturity of these children a barrier, would have excused them from meeting Him till they were older; but He was much displeased—they were the very disciples He liked best, these teachable little children.

The Church of Christ must be careful never to fall under that displeasure. So soon as the children in our homes are old enough to learn about anything, they are old enough to learn about Him; and learning about Him, to love Him and trust Him and please Him. Their immaturity is not an excuse, but a qualification for promptly beginning the discipleship to which they are called.

And sometimes these little ones may be old enough to be called to speak for Him. We must not be too much scandalized if sometimes the Lord treats other children as He treated the child Jeremiah, giving them words to speak for Him in their childish way, just because they are children. How often some infantile prophet in your own home will preach a better sermon to his father than ever you, the father, had preached to the child. So much for

immaturity as an excuse for declining some call of God.

Then the second excuse offered is inability. This is a very common excuse for declining God's call —natural inability; and for an example of this, will you take another great prophet, Moses, when the Lord was ordering him down into Egypt to speak to King Pharaoh and the people; and the man cried, as we read in the fourth chapter of Exodus, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

Here, again, we think the better of Moses for not rating his own abilities very high. A prophet who should start out by congratulating himself on his own remarkable eloquence would not be one that you would care much to listen to—a man naturally swift of speech, who has only to open his mouth and the words pour out of themselves, gifted with that fatal facility of religious exhortation. I have always fancied that Aaron was an orator somewhat of that order. He could talk easily: "The Lord knows that he can talk."[1] But Moses was different; it was not easy for him to express himself; he was slow of speech. There must be a great deal in his heart to say before the right

[1] Exodus iv, 14.

word would come, and now the thought of going on this mission to King Pharaoh left him speechless.

That is well; but the question is, whether a man shall make this inability of which he is so painfully conscious an excuse for persistently refusing to obey God's call. Oh, he must not do that, for that would be charging God with folly in calling him. If God chooses to call the man, it must mean that He can change the apparent defect into a real qualification for just the work He wants from this man. These slow speakers sometimes make the most effective speakers. We are told that the bore of a good rifle must be a little too small for the bullet, so that the bullet will not go through the barrel till there is much power accumulated behind to push it. With that power, when it goes, it goes; there is no stopping it till it has pierced its mark. Now Moses's bullet was bigger than his bore. His thought was too big for his mouth. His words came hard; but when one of them really came out, there was nothing in all Egypt that could stop it.

But the words of brother Aaron, the easy talker —I do not know what they were; who does? The only impression they have left on the record was when he directed the people how to make the golden calf. Generally Aaron's words were like a charge

of bird-shot trickling from the mouth of a twelve-inch cannon, without power enough to dint a pine board.

Here you have found yourself called to do something for your Master; that is to say, there is something that evidently needs to be done for Him, and it was you who discovered the need; that discovery by you constitutes your call. But at the very moment of discovery you became aware of natural defects and limitations in yourself which seem to make it impossible for you to do that thing. Perhaps the service is a word that ought to be spoken; and you, you are not eloquent. You always knew it, but never before had you felt it so painfully as now. Someone else must be found to speak that word, like brother Aaron here who talks so easily. He has only to open his mouth and the words roll out. Is it not his calling? Is he not a priest, or a parson? So you excuse yourself.

Yet your conscience is not quite silenced. It is as if an unseen Master were saying, "Someone must speak that word for me;" and even while He says it He is looking at you. Do not go on refusing. The Master who calls you can take your felt inability and make it a qualification.

There are silent people in every community, people of religious reserve, who because of this reserve

never speak to a neighbor personally about religion. They think themselves excused by their slowness of speech. Yet the Apostle Paul could not make the impression on the neighbor that some of them could make if they would speak to the neighbor, largely because the neighbor knows that the word comes so hard. The power that has set your slow tongue moving at last is a power that he finds it impossible to resist.

Immaturity, then, and inability, here are two excuses. And then another excuse that many offer when God calls is their own positive unworthiness. For one example of this you may take still another of the great prophets, the man Isaiah, when he saw that awful vision of the Lord in the Temple, described in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, and he turned to hear the seraphim saying, "Holy, holy, holy," and it began to be borne into his heart that this most holy God had a message of warning to send to His unholy people; but Isaiah felt he could not take it himself. "No, no; woe is me!" he cried, "for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." He was too bad a man to be God's messenger.

Another example of the same thing would be the disciple Peter in the boat, when first a clear vision of Christ's awful holiness and power came upon

him, and the man fell down at Jesus' knees, crying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He felt himself too bad a man to be the disciple and messenger of such a Lord. And in each case it was an altogether proper feeling; the sin which those two men felt in their own hearts was a barrier, and a fatal barrier, to the kind of service that the Lord wanted of them. A man with unclean lips could not carry Jehovah's message to Israel. A man with such evil lurking in his heart as Peter felt in his, could not lead sinners to the Saviour. The sin that these two men felt in themselves was a disqualification, and a fatal disqualification while it lasted, for the service to which they felt themselves called. But it was not incurable, it need not last forever. And the very call which they had heard was an offer on God's part to take them and make them fit for the service to which He was calling them—an offer to cure that existing disqualification. And so it seemed to Isaiah that one of the seraphim flew to him, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar, and he laid it upon the man's mouth, saying, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." And then when he heard the voice saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go?" the man answered promptly, "Here am I, send me."

And so, too, it was for Peter after his sorrowful and remorseful ejaculation. Jesus said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Peter was not fit for that work, but let him not be afraid, Jesus was going to make him fit. And the later history shows how patiently the Master kept at it with this particular disciple till He had made him fit; how He prayed for him that his faith might not fail under Satan's sifting; how He charged him, "after he was converted, to strengthen his brethren"; and how Peter's remembrance of his own sin and its forgiveness made him almost irresistible in pleading with other sinners. These men were unworthy of the office; there was no question about the fact of unworthiness. Their sin did unfit them for the service to which they felt themselves called. But the Lord was offering to make them fit, offering to change this defect into a qualification. So now the practical question was, were they willing to let Him do it? Were they willing to let God separate and cleanse them from their own sin, that they might be fit to serve Him?

And so, if the call was coming to any of us to do some Christian work, and we were pleading off on the excuse of unworthiness, saying that we were not good enough, no doubt it is true as a mere statement of fact, but you see it does not really touch the question; it is not at all a valid excuse. For

the question comes right back, Are we willing that the Lord who calls us to the service should make us fit for it? That is what any call to His service really means. This Master does not trifle with His servants.

Suppose the duty were that which summons all to the confessing our Lord's name, as His people confess it when they come about His table. It is a request that comes from Him to all His friends, to all who love His name, "Do this in remembrance of me." But some decline; and of those who decline to come, how many have given it as a reason that they feel they are not good enough to come. Well, they are not; there is no doubt about that. Indeed, if any felt that they were good enough, one must advise them to stay away. He invites us to come because we are not good enough. A part of the sacrament will be the cup, the emblem of the blood that was shed for us "for the remission of sins"; that is, it is the emblem of penitence and forgiveness. And so what we started to offer as an excuse for staying away from the Lord's table proves to be really a reason for coming, if—but I must confess this is a large if—if we are truly sorry for those faults and willing to be freed from them. The proper prayer for a believer coming to the table of his Lord is:

"Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot;
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

So much, then, for our three excuses; and you may take these as samples of all the varied excuses that men ever offer for not obeying some call of God: The excuse of immaturity, "I cannot speak, for I am a child;" the excuse of natural inability, "I cannot speak, for I am not eloquent;" the excuse of unworthiness, "I cannot speak, for I am a man of unclean lips." True in every case as a bare statement of fact, but in neither case a valid excuse; for whenever the man is willing, we find the Lord changing this apparent defect into a real qualification for the service to which He has chosen him.

Oh, why not unlearn and break off altogether this foolish habit of offering excuses to God? Does He not know already more than we can tell Him about our unworthiness, or inability, or immaturity? If, in spite of all, He calls, impressing this deep sense of duty upon our consciences, the proper answer is, never an excuse, but, "Here, Lord, send me."

CHAPTER VII

PRESSING ON—A NEW YEAR'S MEDITATION [1]

We are considering man's response to God's choice and call. The last chapter gave several instances of men called to some high position of honor and usefulness whose first impulse was to beg off, pleading some excuse why they could not accept. It will be remembered that each of these men after a while overcame that impulse, and became ready to say, in the language of one of them, "Here I am, Lord, send me."

I hope it may not seem necessary that I should attempt the mournful record of any of those who persist in their refusal, and to the end, however the Lord urges His invitation, will not come. Whatever their fate may have to teach, it would not shed much light on the nature of God's election.

I would rather turn at once to the example of a man who was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but, having heard a call, immediately, and for the rest of his life, made it his one business to obey it. His steadfast purpose, stated in his own words,

[1] Preached in the Brick Church, January 1, 1905.

may be found in the epistle to the Philippians, chapter third, verses thirteen and fourteen: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There was a great historian who used to say that one thing essential to the doing of his own work was the art of oblivion, that he should know how to forget. The writer of our text seems to hold the same opinion with regard to the doing of his work as an apostle; he must know how to forget.

Not to forget everything, of course, in either case; for where would your history be if you should forget everything? And where would your Christianity be? Is not the great sacrament of our faith an act of remembrance? "Bless the Lord, O my soul," cries every grateful worshipper, "and forget not all His benefits."

This very apostle once wrote to the believers in Corinth, bidding them remember how a year ago they had been very forward to contribute for the poor saints in Jerusalem; and he intimates that they must remember to pay up these old debts of a year ago, else there would be no hope of starting any new year prosperously. We must remember both God's good gifts and also our own duties. And yet no man has learned how to use his memory

to best advantage until he has made some progress in the other art of oblivion, of forgetting. And that is what our text sets before us for our New Year Meditation, the Christian art of forgetting the past.

"Forgetting the things behind, and reaching forth to the things before." It is the figure of a racer, running for a prize. Three or four years ago over twenty thousand excited people watched a lad running full speed the length of a field. The papers the next morning were full of his praises, because he had made this great run successfully. Reading the accounts, I found myself curious to know how the boy himself felt when he was doing it; and meeting him some months later, I asked him how he had felt, or whether he could remember how he felt, when he was making that famous run. He told me he remembered very distinctly; he said that the only sound he was conscious of while he was running down the field—where really those twenty thousand excited people were filling the air with indescribable clamor—the only sound this boy was conscious of were the quick footsteps of the runner behind him, who was trying to overtake him. He said the impulse was almost irresistible to turn his head and see whether this other man was gaining; but then the thought flashed through his mind of another great race, run a few months

earlier in England, where the leader did glance over his shoulder, and it lost him the race; and so my friend had kept his face straight forward and won. That college lad has been my best commentator for this thirteenth verse of the third chapter of Philippians. A runner running to win in a close race must not waste time looking back over his shoulder

"Forgetting the things behind;" for your use of your memory might be like looking over your shoulder. We speak of a tenacious memory, but what is it tenacious of? Of the treasures from the past that we need to carry forward with us into the future?—that is memory's use. But the phrase might mean "tenacious of the man," holding him back and chaining him to the dead past, putting him out of the future race altogether—that is memory's abuse. Now our text warns us against just this abuse of the memory, teaching us how to break that chain and to forget the things that ought to be left behind.

What are some of these things that we must train ourselves to forget, things to which we must not let our memories enchain us? As a proper New Year's meditation, let me suggest two or three of them—or two or three classes of them.

And first, sorrows. In such a company as this there must be many to whom the old year had

brought some heavy sorrow; and when our New Year text bids us "forget the things that are behind," we say, "But that cannot mean my sorrow." Yes, but it can mean our sorrow. Our Christian faith must teach us the art of forgetting even our sorrows. Not forgetting the dear ones for whom we sorrow—God forbid that anything should ever rob us of that most precious heritage from the older years. Is not this sacrament itself a loving remembrance of the dearest friend of all, fastening upon Him the thoughts of all who had loved Him, and making Him dearer and dearer to them year by year? Those earliest friends of Jesus had seen Him taken from them, but they must never forget Him.

But do you not know that the memory of our dead, if we brooded over it, might sometime become a sorrow without hope, chaining us to the past, holding us away from all future effort and aspiration and joy, wronging the living and dishonoring the dead? It must not be so. Whenever the old year's sorrow threatens to hold a Christian back in any way from the race that is set before him, then he must forget that sorrow. Remember your dear ones tenderly, but forget such sorrowing over them. Christ said to one of his hearers, "Let the dead bury their dead, but preach thou the kingdom of God."

And then again, the old year's failures. I am not speaking of such failures as might still be made good, such old-year debts as might still be paid, for of course the only proper way of forgetting those is to pay them, and have done with them; but there are many human failures of another sort, which can never be made good by us. They have gone back into the past, but the memory of them can hold the man back there, too. The memory of last year's failure can murder this year's hope and effort. Such a man never gets from under the shadow of that old humiliation, and never finds heart to try again. Oh, what a common story it is in every walk of life—or I might say, in every run of life—the story of the man who had entered for his first race with brightest expectations, and he ends that first race ingloriously; and it seems to him that all the world is deriding him for his failure, and therefore he never finds heart to try again —at least, never in that kind of race, never with that class of competitors; all his highest ambitions have been knocked out of him by the memory of that one initial discomfiture.

But what an unworthy use of the memory that is, as if the child must content himself with creeping through the world all the rest of his days because of that absurd tumble the first time he tried to walk on his feet. The whole story of human progress

is made up of the combined biographies of those choicer spirits who fail again and again and again; who forget the number of past failures in their unchanging determination to keep on till they succeed. Think of the advances of science, and the ridiculous guesses at truth that men used to call knowledge. Look at the maps of the old geographers; read the schemes of the old Ptolemaic astronomers, or the theories of the old physicians; watch the old seekers after the philosopher's stone and the fountain of youth. Every effort at larger knowledge ending in such absurd and humiliating error, how is it that with the memory of so many failures any man should go on thinking at all? But some have gone on, holding their faces forward; and once in a while one of them wins a prize too, and blesses the world with it. Forgetting the failures behind and still reaching forth to the unknown success ahead, someone touches it at last. Now that high, rare courage of the few choicer spirits is what the Gospel would make the common possession of us all. To that our Master calls us. Forget your old year's failures; keep your face the other way. The old humiliation and disappointment cannot trouble you much if you refuse to remember them. Oh, I like to read the story of those brave men who have seemed to get a new power of determination with each successive stumble; who could not understand what it meant

to be beaten; who have fairly tired out the obstinate opposing of men and things, and gained the victory at last just by their own more obstinate resolution. That is the Christian temper: forgetting the failures behind, and reaching forth to the goal that is far before, until you touch it.

Of course this means also forgetting the moral failures behind, the sins. Why, the old year was full of my unworthinesses; it would take the whole new year from January to December to write any adequate record of my moral shortcomings for the old year. I do not propose to spend the precious time so unprofitably. I have confessed those sins to God, and I believe His offer of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. He has offered to cast them behind his back, and that means behind my back too, so that He and I may look away from them and move forward cheerfully together. That is Paul's temper: "I am going to press forward toward the prize of my high calling in Christ just as hopefully as if I had never tried a thousand times before to be like Him, and failed. I have forgotten that I did fail. I will not let the memory of past failure lessen my present Christian hope and aspiration. The discouraging record of the old year is blotted out for me. I have forgotten it, and the record of the new year is clean, and I am determined to make it truly Christlike. By God's grace

I am going to keep on trying at this thing, of being like Jesus Christ, until I succeed at it." That is the temper of our text; and is it not a good, wholesome, Christian, new-year temper with reference to all past failures? Forget them; leave them behind.

And past successes; forget those, of course. Leave those behind you, of course. If you turn back to look at those, it is very certain that you will never win so close a race as we are entered in. Is there any more demoralizing use of the human memory than this perpetually complacent recollection of some little incipient success? The poor writer who makes an accidental hit with his first literary production, and then lives on the memory of it the rest of his life—what a disastrous misuse of the memory. Or what shall one say of the human creature who never lifts his hand—does no stroke of useful work from his cradle to the grave—because of the oppressive memory of some good thing that his father did. If he could only forget! Have you not always liked that answer of Napoleon's marshal when one of the aristocratic courtiers of Austria asked about his ancestors: "We have none," he answered proudly, "we are the ancestors."

A school-girl read me an excellent sermon the other day upon this very text—though we were not talking about the text—our of the military history

of Prussia—Prussia, whose armies under the great Frederick had overcome the world. Fifty years later, still living on these glorious memories, and looking backward, the armies of Prussia met Napoleon and there was no measure to the humiliation he inflicted upon them. Again, a little more than fifty years and Prussia, turning away from the past, forgetting both the glory and the shame, setting her face forward, again meets another Napoleon; and all the world knows what happened at Sedan in the year 1870. Forgetting the things that are behind; forgetting your old failures, forgetting your old successes; not as if I had already attained; not as if I were already perfect; reaching out ahead; forward—that is the rule for successful running.

There have been people who have actually professed to hold the Christian faith, and yet they professed to hold also a doctrine of human perfection; as if they themselves had already attained, and were already perfect—some of them do not hesitate to say that it is so, they are perfect. Can you conceive of a more mournful misuse of the memory? For surely the man who says that must have turned round; he must be looking backward. No one could think himself perfect unless he were looking backward. Those poor little past performances of his—he looks at those and nothing else; they quite fill

his mind, all the mind he has; they fill it full, and so he seems perfect. Turn around, man, look the other way; look at the goal! Where is your perfection now?

Oh, it is going to be a hard, close race for any man to reach that mark, the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And you see I have not been wresting Scripture in using this text for our study of divine election; for it describes our calling. There is no one sentence in the entire Pauline literature in which that "chosen vessel" shows us more of his own heart on this subject, and what the great doctrine of election meant to him. "This high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" to be really like Jesus Christ; to have His faith, His purity, His charity, His disinterestedness, His unlimited self-sacrifice, when He gave His life on the Cross for His friends and counted all the world His friends—that was the office or prize to which Paul now found himself chosen and called; and he was honestly running for it, and counting all things dross in his determination to win it. Are you honestly running for that same mark? The question confronts us all, for that is what it means to a Christian. But if you are running for it, can you not hear the quick footsteps of your antagonist close behind you? Can you not feel his hot breath on your neck? All the influences of this unchristian

world, all the evil impulses of your own lower self, trying to grasp you again, and pull you back from that high ideal? You will have to run your fastest to keep ahead. You cannot afford to waste the time even to look over your shoulder to see whether your enemy is gaining on you. You will have to push right on. "Forgetting what is behind, reaching out for what is before, pressing toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The great master of this great doctrine has left us that saying as man's proper response to the election of God.

PART SECOND

THE PURPOSE OF ELECTION

"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."

CHAPTER I

CALLED TO FRUITFULNESS

THE earlier part of this book has offered various Scriptural examples of God's choice of men, and also of the man's response. We were concerned then with the immediate fact of the choice, rather than its ultimate purpose. Not that it would be possible even then to exclude all reference to the purpose. Once and again, especially in the second chapter, the thought has forced itself upon us that if God has chosen to exalt one man to privileges greater than those enjoyed by his neighbors, it was through no unworthy favoritism for the one exalted, but that there was some larger purpose in the choice, from which in due time those very neighbors might hope to reap their share of the benefit. This thought could never be altogether forgotten; but in that earlier part of the book I had no wish to dwell upon it, but simply to set forth enough examples from Scripture to prove that God in His wisdom does choose to make men differ, that He is constantly electing particular individuals to varying advantages; and that the one vitally important question for every individual

must be, What sort of response will he make to this electing choice of God?

Someone may interrupt me at this point to say that, according to the great creeds of the Reformed Churches, this response from the man, whether favorable or unfavorable, has been itself already determined by God's earlier elective decree; he may also say that the creeds can sustain this position by scriptural authority, and also that this is the one important element in the scriptural doctrine. The first of those affirmations I am ready to accept, and the second with some qualifications; but the third must be frankly denied. We have now reached the point at which it is necessary to confess that the doctrine of the creeds had sometimes diverged gravely from the doctrine of Scripture.[1] The mystery of human freedom as affected by the Divine decree is sometimes touched upon in Scripture, but only as a mystery which the writer could not altogether ignore. He admits it, and then leaves it one side; for it is not the important element of the doctrine, and does not need to be explained. Scripture plainly asserts the fact of God's almightiness, and as plainly the fact of man's freedom, but takes no pains to solve the apparent inconsistency between those two facts.

[1] This objection can hardly be urged against the standards of the Presbyterian Church since the revision of 1903.

Dr. Sanday well says, in his "Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans": "Chapter ninth implies arguments which take away free-will; chapter tenth is meaningless without the presupposition of free-will. And such apparent inconsistency of language and ideas pervades all St. Paul's epistles. . . . The antinomy—if we may call it so—of chapters ninth and tenth is one which is and must be the characteristic of all religious thought and experience. . . . We can but state the two sides; we cannot solve the problem."[1] The theologians who framed our creeds made some attempt at solving that problem, thereby diverging from Scripture.

The important element of the scriptural doctrine of election is not concerned at all with this antecedent mystery, but rather with the purpose of the choice. God's choice of Israel—that is the subject forever pressing on the heart of these inspired writers when they speak of election—God's choice of Israel; and for what purpose did He choose that one peculiar people?

So also, when their study of the doctrine is carried on from the national application to the individual, after once establishing the fact that God in His wisdom does choose different men to varie-

[1] International Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 348.

ties of privilege, then Scripture quickly forces each elect soul to the inquiry, What was I chosen for? The Master distributes the talents as he sees best, but each servant must make haste to give account of his own use of the particular talent that has come to him. That solemn responsibility of the chosen servant is the essence of the doctrine in Scripture. Everything else was preparatory to that. Nowhere do we find a clearer or more comprehensive statement of the Christian doctrine of election than in those words of Christ which have been placed at the head of this second part of our book, "I have chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."

This second part of our discussion, therefore, is the important part. The theme is very broad, for it covers the whole field of Christian duty. For the Christian, the study of ethics is no longer abstract, and lifeless, and monotonous; as if this doctrine were like a lot of dry goods stored on a shelf, and distributed indiscriminately over the counter to the tired and tiresome procession of purchasers; but each man's duty becomes now as vitally personal to himself as the body which God has given him. Duty for him is his own proper use of his own peculiar talent; and the God who chose to give the talent, gave it with a view to that particular use. "We are His workmanship, created

in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." [1]

What a truth this is to stir the soul, if once your soul can be opened to it! It is a truth that has captivated the imagination of many who would hardly be called Calvinists. So genial a theologian as Phillips Brooks exulted in the thought of God's ideal for the life of every man. In his sermon on "The Pattern in the Mount" he calls this "one of the loftiest and most inspiring thoughts." He says it "ennobles and dignifies our living;" that it "takes something of this dreadful extemporaneousness and superficialness and incoherence out of our life." [2] And Dr. Horace Bushnell—what reader of his sermons has not been thrilled by that splendid title of one of them "Every Man's Life a Plan of God"? [3]

This is the great subject which it now remains for us to consider, every man's life as a plan of God; every man's duty as the doing of that particular work which God had before ordained for that particular man; or the improvement of that particular privilege which God had chosen to give him; or the discharge of that particular office to which God had elected him.

[1] Ephesians ii, 10.
[2] Sermons preached in English Churches, p. 4.
[3] Sermons for the New Life, p. 9.

The whole sphere of Christian ethics lies open before me. I shall take from it only a few examples here and there of duty or privilege, endeavoring to set them forth in this light as objects of the discriminating choice of God.

I believe these examples will sufficiently prove that a sense of being personally chosen of God—and that is the very essence of the doctrine of election—that such a sense is the best support of that personal courage by which a man can live his life through worthily, and then die with good cheer. Therefore I think that a hearty belief in the doctrine of election as it is taught in Scripture will supply the very elements of character needed to meet the peculiar moral perils of our age, enabling the men of our day to play the same manly part that was played by the old Calvinists in the days of the Reformation.

Those churches which have inherited this particular doctrine from their fathers may well believe that they are elected to the task of keeping up the supply of such men.

CHAPTER II

CALLED TO FREEDOM

Before going farther, let us resolutely face the question whether this sense of God's choosing of men comes into conflict with our instinctive conviction that men have to choose for themselves. It is often affirmed that it does, and that the doctrine of decrees, or of election, must overthrow the doctrine of the freedom of the will. Is it so? I believe it does just the opposite—that the former doctrine establishes the latter; and I might take as a text for proving this the words of Paul, when he assures the Galatians that they have been "called unto liberty;"[1] but I prefer to take the words of Jeremiah, eighteenth chapter and sixth verse; "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

So far as I know, this was the first use in Scripture of this figure of the potter and the clay, a figure that was to become famous in doctrinal discussion. For it was a very striking figure; having

[1] Galatians v, 13.

been used once, it was likely to be used again and again by the prophets, till it became a sort of proverb among them;[1] and long afterward the apostle would use it in his great argument to the Romans, "Hath not the potter power over the clay?"

Men have often quoted this figure to prove our passive helplessness under the Divine omnipotence —like lifeless clay in the potter's hand. They argue from it a kind of religious fatalism. But if that is what it really means, you would suppose that the figure, and all the doctrines connected with it, would be specially popular in regions where the people have been content to lie passive under the arbitrary power of human rulers. If fatalism is really the doctrine that Jeremiah learned in the potter's house and handed on to Paul, and Paul to Augustine, and Augustine to Calvin—the doctrine of human helplessness under the arbitrary omnipotence of God—you would suppose that this Calvinism, to give it its modern name, must be a very popular doctrine with despotic human kings, who profess to rule by divine right, and who expect their subjects to yield them some kind of passive obedience. But in fact, as we have been already

[1] Isaiah lxiv, 8. The reference in Jeremiah is so evidently the original, that this might be given as an incidental proof of the later date of this part of Isaiah.

reminded, for three hundred years no other kind of man has been quite so hateful to a tyrant as a Calvinist. In the sixteenth century, whenever a despotic ruler like Charles V. of Spain, or his successor, Philip II., learned of a hotbed of what he called sedition and rebellion, he would take it for granted that the people there were Calvinists. In Geneva, in the Netherlands, in Scotland, those three strongholds of popular liberty in the sixteenth century, where freemen would not know that they were beaten, but kept right on fighting for liberty year after year and generation after generation, in order that you and I might be free to-day, the people were all Calvinists. A hundred years later in England, in the time of the Civil War, the Puritans, the popular party, were Calvinists; and the King's party called themselves Arminians—that is, they all hated a Calvinist. And over in New England, those early settlers who came over to plant here the seeds of popular freedom were Calvinists. Now this is a very singular phenomenon, if Calvinism really means a kind of fatalism, if it means that man is helpless and passive before God, like lifeless clay in a potter's hand. Perhaps, after all, it does not mean that; perhaps this famous doctrinal figure of the potter and the clay itself means quite the opposite of that.

Take time to turn back to the first use of the

figure, and learn what it really did mean at the beginning; back of Calvin, back of Augustine, back even of Paul, to that ancient heroic prophet from whom the later teachers all borrowed the expression. What did Jeremiah mean when he stood there in the potter's house watching him at work, and suddenly the thought flashed upon him that as clay was in the hand of that potter, so was Israel in the hand of the Lord?

Well, it appears that the Jews of that age had been sinking into a kind of despairing fatalism. In earlier, happier days they had indulged another sort of fatalism. They had been accustomed to believe that they and their nation must be blessed because of descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they thought that God had bound Himself by promises to those old patriarchs in such a way that He must bless the children, whatever the children might do or might not do—a kind of optimistic fatalism. But now darker days had come, bringing wickedness and misfortune and peril, trouble after trouble, until it began to seem that there was some sort of hereditary curse resting upon Israel. And now many of the people were swinging over to the diametrically opposite conclusion, that God had bound Himself by some sort of oath to afflict Israel, no matter what the children might do. "The fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the

children's teeth were set on edge." It was despairing, pessimistic fatalism.

Now, the prophet Jeremiah, in the chapter which contains our text, squarely contradicted this opinion in both its forms. Neither the optimistic fatalism nor the pessimistic is true. God has not bound Himself by any such past engagement one way or the other. Even when woes have been threatened by God's prophets against a wicked people, if the people repent, Jeremiah says, God is free to repent also and change His purpose, and not send the trial. Or if He has made promises of good to a righteous people, if the people fall away from their righteousness, they will forfeit the good, for God has not bound Himself to give it to them. There is no such fatal bondage of necessity either for good or evil. God is free to deal with His people to-day as they deserve to be dealt with to-day. That was what Jeremiah was thinking of as he stood in the potter's house; for, like the clay in the potter's hand, which he is free to make into any shape that pleases him to-day, so is Israel in God's hand. He is not bound, but free to deal with them as He chooses; and God chooses to deal with them as free, accountable beings, who may disobey if they will, and then He will punish them; who may repent and turn to Him, and then He will accept them. Do you see the point of the

figure? It does indeed express God's power over all the conditions of human existence; but it declares that God has chosen to use that supreme power to secure the freedom of every one of His human creatures. That is the shape into which the potter is really moulding this handful of clay, into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

This was the figure which Jeremiah took from the potter's house and handed on to Paul. I cannot understand all that the apostle says about it in the ninth chapter of Romans, but it is evident that the figure itself means freedom.

It is evident, too, that Paul himself loved to talk about freedom, urging men to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. And this is the essential truth of the body of doctrine called Calvinism; it is liberty. I do not say that Calvin himself always fully understood it or talked wisely about it, or his followers after him, or Augustine before him. They might sometimes use language which sounded more like tyrannical fatalism and hopeless human impotence. They were carrying their treasure in earthen vessels, but it was a treasure, a treasure of liberty.[1]

[1] "That our consciousness of personal freedom is reliable, that we in a true sense stand outside of the current of necessary causation and do truly originate and give direction to our own actions, is a principle fundamental to all morals and all religion."—*Popular Lectures, by Dr. A. A. Hodge*, p. 158.

"The potter and the clay"—it means that the sovereign omnipotence of God is on the side of all who will to be free, and that He is able to make them free. No matter how discouraging or oppressive any of the conditions of our lives may be, those conditions can never make slaves of us, if the omnipotent God is on our side to make us free. We admire the devotion of the men and women in Russia who are ready to suffer so much for the emancipation of their people. But, alas! they are not sustained by a faith like this. If there were only a few more Calvinists among them, perhaps they would have already attained the freedom of their race.

It is a lesson on bondage and freedom—the freedom that comes through faith in God, faith in Christ, a freedom from every kind of bondage. And now let me ask, From what kinds of bondage do any of us need to be emancipated?

It is the custom of our day to speak of the forces that affect our lives under two main heads, heredity and environment. The names are modern, but it is evident that these same forces were quite as active in Jeremiah's day, six hundred years before Christ, as they are now, nineteen hundred years after. Heredity and environment. Heredity—it means everything that we took from our parents, the entire inheritance, physical, moral, spiritual,

with which we began our life. And this inheritance is very extensive. You observe a child repeating unconsciously his father's tricks of tone, and manner, and bearing; a thousand times a day he makes you think of the father. You discover in him, after awhile, certain inherited tendencies to physical disease. Also you may discover certain tendencies to moral disease. The father had yielded to some sinful indulgence; no one knew it, probably; and here is the child, when the time comes, falling a victim almost inevitably to the same habit or appetite. "It was in the blood," you say sadly, pityingly; "it had to come out sooner or later."

It is a depressing subject of study, this heredity. Indeed, if you give your mind to it too exclusively, following up the different lines of resemblance, it is easy to think that the child has inherited every single trait that makes him what he is to-day, either from his father or from his mother. The two ancestral lines cross and confuse each other somewhat, but if you could perfectly disentangle them you think you could fully account for everything in the boy. The thought is most oppressive, when it really takes hold of you, for what has become of my freedom, if everything I think, or say, or do to-day, every virtue and every vice in my present character, has been determined in advance by what

my father and mother were fifty years ago? What use of my trying to make a better man of myself, if already so long ago they had fully fixed my destiny? That is exactly what they were saying in the time of Jeremiah, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes;" it was one of their common proverbs—"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But then there is the other set of influences, what we call environment. It means all the surrounding conditions which tend to modify our own inherited temperament and constitution: the law of the land, for instance; the opinions and customs of my neighbors; the stress of poverty, if we are poor; or the luxury of wealth, if we are rich; the tyrannical power of unions and trusts; the heat of summer and the cold of winter; the day, the night; these newer forces acting and reacting with the older forces that were born in me; and between them they seem to determine absolutely just what sort of man I am to-day, and what thoughts shall flash through my brain, and what word shall spring from my lips at this particular moment; heredity and environment between them seem to do it all. But if that is so, where does my own will come in, that freedom of which I had loved to boast, that personal initiative which made me a free moral agent deserving praise or blame? It has all dis-

appeared. The old Roman was wrong in saying, "Men at some time are masters of their fate." No, heredity and environment, this strong pair of despots, this fatal duumvirate, seem to have crushed all thought of moral freedom out of me, leaving me only a sort of puppet, to open and shut my mouth, and twitch my hands and feet, and laugh and cry, as fate pulls the string. That is the creed of modern materialistic science. It was also the creed of the old Jews, who said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." And it is a most depressing creed.

Who will deliver us from the bondage? When the forces of the world about us are so strong, what power is there to overcome them, and set our spirits free from their oppression?

Well, now will you look once more at the old prophet's figure of the potter and the clay; and the clay is man, and the potter is God. It is not heredity, or environment, or any other manifestation of material forces which might be enslaving the human soul, but it is God; that august Being, of whom it is said in the very first syllable of this volume of revelation, "In the beginning, God;" and "God created the heavens and the earth." A God who was before this visible universe, and is above it, and beneath it, and beyond it, and round about it, and superior to all its conditions. What

we call the laws of heredity are simply a part of His appointment, but He is above those laws; He has never bound Himself by them. So, too, the conditions of our earthly environment are a part of His appointment; but He is above those conditions also; He has never bound Himself by them. He is the potter holding in His hand this bit of clay, perfectly free to make it into what shape He elects. And this bit of clay is a human soul; and the Potter elects to make it into the shape of a will, a will like His own, a will free enough and strong enough to rise above all those material forces that were enslaving it; strong enough to use them as God Himself would use them; for God is working something of His own creative power of free choice into this creature which He has chosen to call His child.

That is the prophet's figure of the potter and the clay. That is the essential truth which Jeremiah handed down to Paul, Augustine, Calvin. God is above His own creation; He is free to deal with us as free men, and He has chosen to do it; and He is strong enough to do it. He can make us free indeed. It is what He offers to do for us through Jesus Christ, His Son. That is one of the favorite scriptural ways of stating Christ's work of salvation; it is an emancipation. He makes us free. We were under a spirit of bondage; He

gives us a spirit of freedom, a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.

You take that bondage of heredity, for instance. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." And here was a child who had been losing hope of better things, because the inherited curse seemed to press on him so heavily. It might be the child of vicious, dissipated stock, with his doleful inheritance of diseased appetites and passions, which make it so natural for him to go wrong, and so impossible, humanly speaking, to go right. What an awful bondage! What power is strong enough to free him?

No power, I believe, short of the power of God Himself. But that power is strong enough, as many a poor fellow has learned. That arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. When the poor slave of appetite and passion puts himself in God's hands, a bit of clay in the hands of the potter—why, the original miracle of creation has been repeated a thousand times this very year;—read the reports from Wales—for the Potter makes that bit of clay into the form of a free man, and breathes His own Holy Spirit into it as a breath of life, and it becomes a living soul, free and strong enough, by God's grace, to triumph over that inheritance of evil, and win all the grander victory through triumphing over it. Some of the most magnificent

men we know are those who have had to fight a desperately hard battle against the evil inherited tendencies, for by God's grace they have won it. Heredity was all against them, and was very strong, but God was stronger; and so are they stronger when they let Him work His strength into them. So He makes free men of them.

And then, you know, there is a kind of personal heredity, by which to-day you suffer the consequences of what you yourself were doing yesterday. You woke this morning to find yourself the heir of the man who bore your name twenty-four hours ago, a year ago, a dozen years ago. And for many of us this has been an evil inheritance. There were stains of guilt that we could not rub off. The poor queen in the play, her heart black with the murder of good King Duncan, and her hand red with his blood, moans in her sleep that "all the waters of the ocean could not wash that little hand." And they could not; the miserable dreamer was right about that. The stain was too deep to be affected by any such cleansing.

But thousands of poor creatures equally guilty and miserable have learned that, if the ocean could not wash them clean from these stains of guilt, God could. The Divine Potter can do even that for the clay which He holds in His hands. Even the old prophets caught glimpses of this omnipotence

of God's pardon. "There is a fountain opened in Jerusalem for all uncleanness." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." But you and I have seen it more clearly than the prophets could see it; we have known it more certainly ever since God's chosen Son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross for sinners, shedding His blood for the remission of sins. If that poor queen herself had been willing to repent of her sin and trust herself to this divine Saviour, he could have washed that red right hand of hers, and made it white as snow, and fit for all holy services. Many other sinners have tried it and proved it. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

And then, besides these stains of guilt, men inherit from their own past all sorts of habits and evil associations that make to-day a slavery. If you told a lie yesterday, what a fetter it is on your tongue and your hand to-day! If you amused yourself extravagantly yesterday, rolling up debts that you had no money to pay, what a heavy and hopeless burden those debts are upon your back to-day, to forbid all hopeful endeavor! If you have done any wrong act secretly, and some ill-disposed neighbor knows it and henceforth holds over you the threat of exposure, you are his slave

henceforth, and he your pitiless master. And so, in one way or another, many a man, because of past wrong-doing, finds himself bound down helplessly and hopelessly to an ignoble and miserable life. "If only it were to do over," he says; "if only yesterday were mine to live over again, that I might avoid this dreadful blunder, and start free."

But the offer of Christ to such a man is to take him to-day and make him free. It may not mean that He will deliver him from all the unpleasant consequences of his faults; but it does mean that if he will honestly trust himself to Christ, Christ will not let those things tyrannize over him; he shall be a man in spite of them, a free man in spite of them. For that was exactly what Jeremiah saw when he went down to the potter's house. One of the pieces of clay had been marred, spoiled in the making; but the potter was able to shape it over into a form that was fitting and beautiful. A very simple incident; something that might have happened any day in the potter's house, but it gave the prophet this immortal parable of God's power in dealing with His people. However the vessel may have been marred, God is strong enough and wise enough to make it over into some shape that shall be beautiful, and meet for the Master's use; but it is always a shape of freedom. For the Son

of God is never satisfied with His work on this particular piece of clay that we call a human soul until He has made it free indeed.

Oh, what a message of courage it is that comes down to us from that ancient potter's house in Jerusalem! No wonder that Christians with this thought in their hearts fought bravely against human tyrants. This faith in God made free men of them. Such faith in God ought to make free men of all believers. Every Christian in every town might be a radiating centre of the light of personal independence and moral courage. Against all the petty tyrannies of fashion, or of foolish public opinion; against municipal corruption or oppression; against all industrial obstacles and difficulties and slavery; everywhere our Christian faith ought to be fighting for our emancipation. He is on our side in this hard battle to be free. We are like clay in His hands, and this is what He is shaping us into, the glorious liberty of the children of God.

CHAPTER III

CALLED TO WILLINGNESS

"Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold, Alleluia!"

We have been facing the question whether the doctrine of Divine election would overthrow the doctrine of the freedom of the will. I have been arguing that quite the opposite is true, and that the former doctrine, far from overthrowing the latter, really establishes it. A belief in the sovereign power of God establishes one's belief in the freedom of the will. It is He who calls men to that high responsibility of a free will. Through the last chapter I was trying to develop this thought while putting the chief emphasis on the word "free." Through the present chapter I should like to continue the development of the thought, putting the chief emphasis now on the word "will." God calls men to will.

A scriptural starting-point for our meditation may be found in the third verse of the 110th Psalm, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

The Psalm pictures a king in the dew of his

youth going forth to war. In the clash of battle he first breaks through the enemies' line, turning them to flight, and then drives them all before him. When faint with pursuing, he stoops to drink of the brook by the wayside, and then, refreshed by the draught, he presses on to the complete destruction of his enemies. The completeness of the victory is strongly emphasized by the psalm. This victorious king, according to the psalm, shall be also priest of the true God, and a twofold reason is given for his success: first, the favor of God, and, second, the willingness of his people. They are all volunteers in that army; also, they are all a sort of priests, like their leader. They are clad in the beauty of holiness—that is, in priestly garments, like some earlier band of crusaders, their very garments proving the sacredness of their cause. But, moreover, they were all volunteers, not conscripts, driven like slaves into the battle, but "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."

In the Hebrew the phrase is an unusual one. Literally rendered, it would read, "Thy people shall be willingnesses." The word seems to mean that every soldier should be a free-will offering. And this fact is given as the reason of the captain's victorious power. With such an army, and such a captain, victory was sure.

CALLED TO WILLINGNESS

This 110th Psalm is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament as a prophecy of Christ. He is this victorious young King who was to be also a priest after the order of Melchizedek; and His army, through whose willing co-operation the glorious victory must come, is the army to which you and I profess to belong, the Church of Jesus Christ.

The text shows that the source of power for this victory must be in God; the day of victory is the day of His power. But the manifestation of that power is in the willingness of His people. Unless they were properly exerting their wills, the day of God's power had not come. Unless they volunteer, He has no army. "In the day of Thy power, Thy people shall be willing."

In our popular speech, this word "willing," like many other words, has suffered sad degeneracy. We often give it the weakest sense possible, as if "willing" meant no more than "not unwilling." "Are you willing that I should walk across your lawn?" "Yes," you say, "I have no objection." But, of course, that does not mean that you strongly desire your neighbor to walk across your lawn. Probably you would a little rather that he stay on his own side of the fence. But you mean that it is not a matter of very great consequence; you do not care enough about it to risk a quarrel with him; you do not propose to bring a suit for tres-

pass against him; and so, when he asks, "Are you willing," you answer somewhat grudgingly, "Yes, I am willing."

In other words, we treat the word as if it were one of the very weakest words that a man could speak; but, really, it ought to be one of the very strongest. "Willing," using your will, the most Godlike faculty ever given by the Creator to His creature. Why, when a true man says, "I am willing that things should be thus and so," if he means by the word what the word means in our text, you may rest assured that something is going to happen. "Willing"—the word ought to mean the strongest kind of active determination of the will.

"Are you willing to win a victory?" What a strange question that would be for any captain to address to his soldiers, taking the word as we now generally speak it! What army ever had any objections to winning victories? Of course they are willing. Now and then an army, like those Ironsides of Cromwell's, has really willed to win the victory; the whole vital energy of every soldier in the host transformed into that one determination of will; and it was a day of power always—always. The armies of Japan have repeated the phenomenon lately.

Suppose you should ask the well-disposed citi-

zens of any great city—suppose you had asked the well-disposed citizens of New York or of Philadelphia, at any time within the last fifty years—whether they were willing that their city should have a thoroughly honest, decent, economical administration of government, what one of them would hesitate to answer, "Yes"; or they might rather stare in silent amazement at so senseless a question. "Willing!" They are more than willing to be well-governed. But no; often they were so much less than willing to be well-governed. It is true, they had no objection to better government, but they were not willing it. The strength of their will was all used up and exhausted in a thousand other directions; they had none left for municipal politics. On several happy occasions within the last fifty years the good people of New York—and just now the good people of Philadelphia—have been willing that their city should enjoy a better government. And so the better government has come; of course it has come. When the people will, it is a day of power.

Are we, members of the different Christian churches, willing that there should be more power in the religion of this community this coming season? Are we willing that God's people here should become more consistent in life, more constant in prayer, more faithful in service? Are we

willing that men and women living by our side should be saved from their sin and degradation, and from the sadness of a life without hope in God, and won over to believe in Him and serve Him? Are we willing that all this should come to pass? Why, of course we are all of us willing, in the weak negative sense that we had no objection to such happy results. Who could object? What an inhuman thing it would be to object that such blessings should be offered to the community! Yes; but think again, are we willing that these things be so? How much positive exercise of will have any of us put forth to have it so within the last twenty-four hours? Are you quite sure that you have done any serious willing lately, even that your own brother should be a Christian, or your own husband, or your own wife, or your own child; that your own home should be a Christian home? Willing it, have you been?

There is a beautiful definition of this word in the Book of Nehemiah, where it tells how they were building the wall of Jerusalem, and it says, "The people had a mind to work." They were willing indeed to build the wall. In their case it was the real thing. And it says in the same connection that "every man was watching over against his own house." Naturally he would be, if he was willing to work; he would naturally begin at the nearest

possible point, somewhere over against his own house. That was the best possible evidence of practical and universal willingness. And so the wall went up. Sanballat and Gashmu, and all the other enemies in the land, could not stop its progress; the people were so willing, it was a day of power.

Are we willing that this should be a day of spiritual power in New York City? Are we willing that men should begin to love and serve our Master, and confess His name, and find hope and courage for living well through faith in Him?

Are you using any of your own will to bring that about for the benefit of a single person in this community? If so, who is the person? What is his name? We must know what his name is if we are willing so much good to him. When you go to your lawyer's office to write what you call a will, you put the names of the beneficiaries in very definitely. Who is this man to whom you are willing so much spiritual good, exercising your God-given will that by God's grace that person should become a Christian, or a better Christian, this year?

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." God has elected that the highest illustration of His power shall be in the most intense willingness of His people. He has elected them to that

tremendous responsibility. He has elected to endow them with this faculty of a free will; it is free, and it is a will. "He worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Any so-called doctrine of Divine sovereignty or Divine election is counterfeit if it degrades the will, this mightiest power in the universe, into mere passive acquiescence in unwelcome fate.

The standard scriptural instance of such perversion of doctrine is Eli. "It is the Lord," said the poor old man, "let Him do what seemeth Him good." But Eli, in saying this, was a false witness for God. Eli was passively submissive; he was not unwilling that God's will be done. But God had made His will plain that this too acquiescent father should exercise some active will of his own toward those worthless sons of his. Eli would not do that. He still drifted on passively acquiescent, burying the best talent God had given him. However amiable his disposition, he remained a fatally will-less man. And therefore that was no day of power in Israel; it was the day of shameful defeat. Name the new-born child Ichabod, for the glory is departed. And so the glory will depart wherever men so pervert the doctrine of submission to the sovereign will of God. The true doctrine of God's sovereignty will never produce men of the Eli type.

CALLED TO WILLINGNESS

The true doctrine of Divine sovereignty will show that God calls men to will; and when His people, responding to that call, really do begin to will for Him,—have you wondered at the swelling force of the vapor or of the electric energy in our engines doing the hard work of the world? Have you wondered at that greater strength which turned up the earth's crust long ago in mountain ranges, or that which swings the great earth itself around the sun? But none of these exhibitions of material force mark the day of God's power. The Almighty makes little of such inferior operations; they are as play to Him. According to His own word, the day of His power comes not till His own people, accepting His choice for them, begin freely to will.

Willingness—not wilfulness, which means that the man's passions are strong and that his will is weak—but willingness; it is only another name for courage, that highest kind of courage which springs from faith in God. It is the courage of those who are most sensitive to God's call, and most loyally responsive to it. Never were such men more sorely needed than in this present age of triumphant democracy. Human society is now in danger of losing the qualities which had made the individual most interesting and valuable, sacrificing them to the supposed interest, or to the whim, of the crowd. To guard against this danger of our time, we want

men of the old heroic breed; and there is no better place to look for them than in the place where the world has so often found them—among those who heartily believe in a God who chooses His servants carefully, and calls them one by one to the responsibilities of personal freedom and of courageous willingness.

CHAPTER IV

GRATITUDE

We are asking to what men are chosen of God; but we cannot go far in this inquiry without reflecting that, if chosen at all, they ought to be grateful for His choice of them. One of the earliest fruits of their election, therefore, should be a grateful humility. So it is that humility ranks very high among the Christian virtues.

Our Lord once had occasion to speak this truth to His leading disciples in words which still make our ears to tingle. It was when He had preached that sermon in Capernaum which put an end to His popularity. As the people were leaving Him, He turned to these chosen disciples and said, "Are ye going also?"[1] Peter answered, "To whom shall we go?" adding, "We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." You detect in these words the touch of self-importance and patronage. "We have believed, *we*. The Master must not be too much disheartened by the defection of the crowd. Here are we, his disciples, to vouch for him, and insure

[1] John vi, 67.

his final success." But instantly Christ's answer comes back, "Have not I chosen you?" There was no room for Peter's patronage. It was not the poor disciples who had given Jesus his standing; it was He who who had given them theirs. "Have not I chosen you?"

Neither Peter, nor any man living, could push himself forward and say: "Look at me; see what great service I have rendered this Jesus of Nazareth; see what obligations I have brought Him under. It is my support, my indorsement, that has made Him what He is."

No; but there were many who ought to have said: "Look at Him; see what He has done for us; He is our benefactor; we owe everything to Him." It was He who healed their diseases; it was He who gave bread in their hunger; it was He who drove out the spirits of evil that possessed them; it was He who forgave their sins; it was He who reconciled them to their Heavenly Father. They owed everything to Him.

Often these beneficiaries of Christ failed to acknowledge the debt. They were willing to accept the benefit and forget the benefactor. Once there were five thousand of them out on the hillside, who saw His power and sat down and ate of His bounty; but how few of the five thousand ever called Him Master! Once there were ten lepers

cleansed, but only one turned back to give glory to God. Even of the twelve chosen apostles, one was a traitor. Jesus chose men to various positions of privilege, but many of the men made no choice of Him. That was the common story in those days long ago when Jesus was here among men.

How is it to-day? What is our own attitude toward Jesus Christ? Which does the choosing? Which confers the benefit, and which receives it? I say, our attitude toward Jesus Christ; but probably some of you might answer that you are not conscious of holding any attitude toward Jesus of Nazareth, of bearing any such personal relation to Him, either the one way or the other. You certainly do not profess to have conferred personal benefits on Him; but neither are you aware of receiving personal benefits from Him. Neither of you has chosen the other; the words have no real meaning to you. This doctrine of election has no personal application.

Well, then, let me ask the question in a way that must have some application for all of us. Let me say no more at present about that person Jesus Christ, who lived so many ages ago on the other side of the world. Let us speak of something that everyone must recognize as a present fact in the world, a fact bearing relations to all of us from the day of our birth. No man could attempt to

measure its influence upon our lives. We cannot avoid taking some attitude toward it. This fact is the Christian religion.

Wherever this religion came from, however it came to be what it is, whatever opinions you hold about the person of its Founder, here it is, an evident and vastly important fact in our modern world, and affecting in many ways every soul in Christendom.

Now, the same question that men once asked concerning Jesus, let us ask concerning this institution or power that now bears His name. How is it related to us all? Which does the choosing? Have we chosen it, or has it chosen us?

Have any of us a right to speak of the Christian Church with a tone of patronage, telling of the services we have rendered it, of the benefits we have conferred upon it, of its obligation to us for such position as it enjoys in the world, using Peter's words with the same self-important manner, "We have believed. It is our adherence that gives standing to the Christian Church"? Or should we all of us take rather the tone of humble gratitude to this religion, acknowledging its unceasing and innumerable benefits to us, confessing that whatever standing we have we owe to it?

Our own civilization is Christian. Take us as we are, English-speaking Americans, the religion

of Christ is the moulding power which has been giving shape to whatever is best in our laws, our political conceptions, our literature. There might be other types of civilization, more or less desirable, in other parts of the world of which this would not be true; but ours is Christian.

You ask how it is that we have shaken off the incubus of slavery, or of the notion of a Divine right of kings; or how we have come to think of popular education, or of public office as being a trust for the benefit of the people. The answer is, that all these newer and better conceptions have grown directly out of a sense of the sacredness of each several human life, the value and dignity of every human soul. And that is a part of Christianity's contribution to the thought of the world.

For more than a thousand years this power which we call the Christian religion has been working among our forefathers, shaping their thoughts, kindling their emotions, inspiring them to fight and toil and suffer, in order that you and I might be enjoying to-day the peculiar advantages which attach to American citizenship. That is a great debt, and in the nature of the case the benefit is all one way. We cannot do anything for these dead-and-gone generations, except to cherish their memories and maintain their ideals; certainly we cannot patronize them.

Take for instance, that one department of Christian effort called foreign missions. We hear much of the sacrifices that certain present-day Americans have made for that cause; some of them offering sacrifices of money, and others more precious sacrifices of life—for our hearts grow tender at thought of precious lives laid down cheerfully in our own day by martyrs in China or Africa. But does that mean that any of us modern Americans have been able to put the missionary cause under obligation to us? Dr. Babcock said, before the Missionary Congress in this city, five years ago: "The old Saxon, and Angle, and Dane, and Teuton is in my blood; is it not in yours? I had good old pagan ancestry, believe me. You can see some of their memorials at old Stonehenge to-day. They used to take fair young girls and put them in wicker crates and shoot arrows at them, to see which way their blood would run, that they might know what the gods were thinking about, and how battles would turn out. Oh, you blue-eyed and fair-haired men and women, proud of your Dutch and Irish and German blood, remember and honor the foreign missionaries—Augustine, Paulinus, Patricius, Columba, Gallus—who went out years ago to men and women who were wild barbarians, pagans of the north, my ancestors, and preached to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I am the heir of that

sacrifice; . . . we are the children of the converts of foreign missionaries; and I tell you that fairness means that I must do to others as men once did to me." All that is true; the most that any of us can do for Christian missions abroad is only the belated payment of some part of the debt we owe for what these foreign missionaries have long been doing for us. No American Christian can take a tone of patronage toward the cause of Christian missions.

Or, again, take our popular education, which many would name first among our national advantages. Where did it come from? The simple historical fact is that America owes its popular education to the Christian religion. Everyone knows that our older American colleges were founded by the Christian leaders of those days, and with a directly religious purpose—to supply the churches with a learned ministry. But more than that: our free public schools and our state universities grew directly out of the sense of the value of every individual soul and mind; and Christ gave us that thought. And more than that: our public-school system is confessedly defective in one most important respect, because the state is restrained from any positive teaching of religious belief. And yet some sort of belief lies at the foundation of all moral principle; and so our

educators generally would declare, or assume, that the churches of the land must supply this inevitable defect in the training imparted by the schools of the land. Men who are not themselves professedly Christian often rest on this assumption; and they would not hesitate to complain if the churches seemed to be neglecting their duty in this respect.

That is to say, a great many people trust to the Christian religion to supply one of the most important elements of our public education, while yet they themselves contribute nothing in any way toward the support of the Christian religion. It is the old story repeated; they are willing to sit down and be fed with the rest of the hungry five thousand, and they keep on eating until they are filled; but they never take up any of the responsibilities of discipleship. I submit it to you that that is a somewhat humiliating position for any self-respecting American citizen.

Or take the entire work of maintaining the moral order of a community, restraining crime, purifying the home, promoting neighborly kindness, teaching honesty in trade—in short, giving men some sense of the binding force of the Ten Commandments. Everyone looks to the churches and other religious institutions to care for these interests. Even if a man never expects to go to church himself, he would rather that the town he lives in be properly

supplied with churches. If you could hear of a good-sized city anywhere without one house of worship, or any other distinctly Christian organization in it, would you think it a prudent investment to put much money into that town?

I tell you there are multitudes of people who have never thought of Christ as a person to whom they owe anything at all, and who yet consent to accept these practical benefits continually from the Church which bears His name. In the investment of their money and the location of their homes they deliberately count upon these benefits, and they do not pretend to make any sort of return; or if sometimes they subscribe five or ten dollars to some Christian enterprise, it is with an air of infinite condescension and patronage; "See what we have done for your church." Think of it, men who every year of their lives are drawing hundreds of thousands of dollars of profit from services which the Christian Church renders to their estates, will subscribe their tens or fifties, and act as if they were conferring a great favor on the Christian religion; eating of the loaves till they are filled to bursting, and only this beggarly return!

We sometimes hear it said that indiscriminate Christian charity promotes pauperism. I am afraid it often does, though I hardly see how it can be wholly avoided. But let me say, the list

of the Church's paupers is longer than many think, and includes some who would be scandalized to hear themselves named in such company. For here is the Christian religion conferring constant and indispensable benefits on every inhabitant of a Christian community; and unless each beneficiary does what he can to pay back the debt—I do not speak now of those persons who may be conscientiously identified with some other religion, and who support that, our Jewish brethren, for instance—I speak of men who, if they professed any religion, would call themselves Christians—I say, unless such a man does what he can to pay his debt and to bear his share of the load, then the spirit of pauperism has fastened hold of him, and he ought to be named among the dependent classes. It may be, therefore, that some of the richest people in the community ought to be named among the most shameless of its paupers, and that some of those who would reject most contemptuously all doctrine of Divine election, offer in their own persons the saddest illustration of the deep significance of that doctrine; has not Christianity chosen them?

In every community will be found some who stand nearer to the Church than those of whom I have spoken, yet it does not occur to them to enter it. They do consent to accept from it a more personal sort of benefits. They wish to be married,

when the time comes, with decent religious solemnity. Some of them, not quite forgetful of old family tradition, wish their children to be baptized. Nearly all of them, when sickness comes, or death, expect to be visited, and, if need be, buried under the forms of Christian faith and hope. And any Christian Church which is at all worthy of the name would be glad to render these services to each and all, without thought of return; but I confess I am often puzzled to understand how people, otherwise self-respecting, can consent to accept these services from an institution which they do nothing to sustain, some of them even turning to curse the hand from which they consent to receive such benefits.

Dr. Chamberlain, the missionary in India, tells how once he was speaking before a society of Brahmins, and at last one of them not yet a Christian rose to reply. Dr. Chamberlain expected some sort of violent discussion, but what the man really said was something like this: "Do you see that mango tree? It bears fruit not for itself; it is pelted with sticks and stones day after day by men, women, and children; is it discouraged? No; next year it bears again; and children's children pelt and enjoy." And then he went on to say that that was a type of these Christian missionaries, and what they were doing for India. That Brahmin was a keen

observer. That is a fair representation of the attitude of the Christian religion wherever it exists to the people living round about it. Say what you will of the faults and the unfaithfulness of many Christians and many churches—for there is many a Judas—yet, taken as a whole, the Church of Jesus Christ, as one great institution or power in the world, is here as the expression of His own spirit of self-sacrifice and good-will; "not ministered unto, but ministering," always doing good, always giving, the one essential motive of its life to confer benefits on men. And multitudes of people in every age and land have been content to take the attitude of mere passive receiving of its bounties, willing to be fed until they are filled, but never confessing the obligation or undertaking any grateful return.

There are some people in every community who will not call themselves exactly disciples, but do confess a certain obligation to the Church, and do undertake some sort of return for its many benefits; that is to say, they contribute money. Certainly this is a great deal better than that they should make no return at all. It is one kind of return that we all ought to make, to give our money. Yet the gift of money is not at all an evening of accounts between them and the Church.

Suppose you were speaking of a man's obligation to the State; he tries to discharge that in part by payment of money; and patriotism may be expressed in part through cheerful and honest payment of your lawful tax. But only in part. The man owes himself as well as his money. And if ever a country reaches a point where its citizens refuse these personal services to the State, giving themselves to private gain and private pleasure while leaving the care of all public interests in time of peace to hired officials, and in time of war to hired mercenaries, that country is not really safe or prosperous; that is not the truest patriotism. You cannot discharge your full debt to the State by any mere payment of dollars.

And neither can you so discharge your debt to the Church, to this great cause of human betterment which for us is visibly embodied in the Church of Jesus Christ. You owe to it, for what it has been doing and is doing, everything that makes your life worth living; and you cannot discharge such a debt by any payment of dollars; it is yourself that you must give. Remember the fierce response that old Simon Magus got from Simon Peter: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. . . . Repent, . . . and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart

may be forgiven thee."[1] This work of helping and blessing men, body and soul and spirit, which goes by the name of Christianity, which has been costing the lives of true believers in every age, and to which you owe everything good you have or hope for, it sometimes claims money, but it claims far more than your money—it claims you. Has it not chosen you?

But after all, where did this present-day fact of Christianity come from? How did it come to be? What supplies its spirit and motive-power? Such effects demand a cause; name the cause. Here is this one agency, pervading human society all over the civilized world; this one indestructible living institution, the very principle of whose life is to do good, to give, to minister, to confer benefits, to lay down the life for others—who created this society, and who keeps it alive?

Its name answers the question, for all the world calls it the Church of Jesus Christ. He who came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to minister, who went about doing good, who said and showed that it is more blessed to give than to receive, who gave His life for men, He is the cause.

Any man who will honestly face the question of how much he owes to the Christian religion, and how he ought to pay the debt, is likely to find him-

[1] Acts viii, 20–22.

self facing another question, deeper and more personal: "How much do I owe to Jesus Christ, and how ought I to pay that debt? Has not He chosen us?"

So, for all the elect this must be one fruit of their election, a grateful humility.

CHAPTER V

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

Our last chapter developed the thought that God is always the Benefactor, and that we, the beneficiaries, always owe our thanks to Him; also, that the Church of Christ as his representative has been called to the position of benefactor, and that the world, the beneficiary, owes its thanks to her. But there might be some danger that a Christian, taking this truth the wrong way, should fall into a Pharisaic and most unchristian superciliousness. Let me make haste, then, to guard against that risk by bringing forward in this chapter a complementary truth which is equally scriptural; for that is the way to correct possible misunderstanding of Scripture—look at other Scripture. When the devil tempted Jesus to some perverted view by quoting something that had been "written," our Lord answered, "It is written again." He quoted other Scripture. And so, if we as Churchman had been tempted to thank God, like Pharisees, because we were not as other men are, "it is written again," in the seventh verse of the third chapter of the Acts, "He took him by the right hand."

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

The hand is the special organ of touch, for in it the nerves of feeling have been developed to the greatest delicacy of discrimination. We see with the eye; we hear with the ear; some kinds of objects are partially made known to us by the sense of smell; but if we are to know any external thing thoroughly, guarding ourselves against all risk of deception, assuring ourselves of its solid and genuine reality, we always like to touch it with the hand.

It was a constant habit of our Lord Jesus to touch people with His hand. In His healing and blessing of the multitudes—not in every case, but generally—He chose to touch them. So it is written, "He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them." So, too, when He would bless the little children, "He laid His hands upon them and prayed."

Jesus left with His disciples the same custom of touching men. When good Ananias was sent to help blinded Saul in Damascus, he came in and put his hands upon him. That was the common apostolic gesture when they were praying for young converts that they might receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit; they laid their hands upon them.

It is one of the natural symbols which explains itself. The presbytery, the older men, by a kind of personal communication, laying their hands on

young Timothy's head, share with him whatever gift and authority they themselves have enjoyed. The symbol represents visibly a spiritual fact; it is through this personal touch of man with man, down through the years, that the authority of Christ and the gifts of His Spirit have been perpetuated in the world. There is an unbroken continuity, a true succession; you and I join hands with those who felt the touch of those hands that were nailed to the cross. There has been no break; the succession—the Apostolic succession—has been maintained.

We believe with all our hearts that Christ has been passing His gifts along in the Church from age to age by the touch of His servants, always by the touch of soul, and generally by the touch of the hand. If some of us object to some particular interpretations of that great doctrine of succession, it is only because these interpretations seem to us to treat the truth too narrowly, in a method too ceremonial and artificial, inventing small and crooked channels for gifts which the Lord Himself causes to flow along more generously. What we are interested in is a glorious dynamical fact, not a musty ecclesiastical theory: the fact that regularly this Christian power and grace have been conveyed from Christ Himself on and on through His Church by direct touch of man with man. Wher-

ever the blessed power is flowing to-day through holy lives and works of Christian love, whether in a Nestorian mission, or a Romish convent, or an Anglican parish, or a Friends' meeting, or a Salvation barracks, there the Apostolic succession—not the ecclesiastical fancy but the real thing—exists and authenticates itself; but if ever that gracious power begins to fail, if ever that power stops, we know that the circuit is broken; some non-conducting body has put itself in the way. No matter though you could produce a whole family tree of archbishops and patriarchs back to St. Peter himself, that does not prove anything. There is evidently a break in the wire, for the current has stopped. You would better see if you cannot come into contact with some other line of transmission which is still alive, and which may bring some of the original vitality back into your own discredited succession.

Yes, these blessings of the Gospel have certainly been handed on to us by other men, else, humanly speaking, we could not now be enjoying them. Evidently, then, our Master intends that we should hand them on to others beyond, thus keeping up the succession; and that is the only satisfactory proof that anyone is still in the succession; the current must flow on beyond him. If earlier believers have laid their hands in blessing upon you, you

must be laying your hands in blessing on someone else.

But we have not yet reached quite the language of our text, for we have spoken of "laying the hand upon." The phrase would suggest two persons who stand on a different level of strength, or honor, or age, or holiness. For it is the gesture of blessing; and "without all contradiction," says the apostle, "the less is blessed of the better." [1]

When Christ laid His hands upon men, it was that some virtue in Him might flow into them. Young Timothy bared his head while the presbytery, men older than he in years, or experience, or official authority, laid their hands upon him, as if conferring upon him something that they already enjoyed. We still use that gesture in every kind of benediction, in the sacrament of baptism, in the service of ordination. "They laid their hands upon him." [2]

But that was not what Peter did when he looked into the face of this impotent man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; he did not lay his hands upon his head and pronounce a sort of dignified benediction over him. No, for he saw something in the man's eyes which led him to take him by the right hand and lift him up. Watch them there a moment

[1] Hebrews vii, 7.
[2] I Timothy iv, 14.

as they stand side by side, the chief of the apostles and this cripple just in the process of restoration to manhood; hand clasped in hand; nothing in the attitude to indicate clearly which was bestowing the grace and which receiving it. They stand there, a pair of brothers lately made acquainted with each other. If that strong grasp indicates that the sturdy apostle is now holding upright one who might otherwise have fallen to the ground, it also indicates that by to-morrow the man who had been a cripple might be in a position to hold up the sturdy apostle from falling to the ground. Each is ready, as the occasion may demand, to offer help to the other, or to accept help from him. Peter grasps the cripple's hand, the cripple grasps Peter's hand.

What a vast deal of Christianity is expressed in that attitude, that friendly equality, that brotherhood, that covenant of mutual helpfulness! For that is one of the ruling thoughts in Christian ethics, one chief element of the Christian calling. "All ye are brethren," Christ said; and here stands Peter, and with him this other child of the great Father, his brother, visibly exemplifying that great Christian doctrine of brotherhood, hand clasped in hand, neither claiming pre-eminence over the other, simply a pair of brethren.

What a splendid exposition that is of the polit-

ical principles of modern democracy, and also of those religious principles which we call, for lack of a better name, Protestantism! If a mediæval painter had been set to depict such a scene as this, I can fancy him making the cripple kiss St. Peter's toe; or possibly we should have had St. Peter, with a theatrical display of condescension, stooping to wash the cripple's feet, glancing over his shoulder meanwhile to see if we were looking on. But I cannot imagine such a painter, if the arrangement of figures had been left to him, making Peter and the cripple clasp hands, in such an attitude of mutual fellowship that you must look twice to see which was cripple and which apostle. It was a splendid assertion of ecclesiastical equality, and of political equality. The world over, this hand-shaking is a very democratic ceremony.

Longfellow used to tell the story at his own expense, how in England he was once admitted to an audience with the Queen; and she held out her hand that he might kneel and kiss it; but he, in his charming ignorance of court etiquette, and full of the kindliest feeling for the royal lady, cordially shook hands with her. Of course he would not have done it if he had known better, but I have always been rather proud that he did not know any better. The instinct of an American gentleman came nearer real propriety than the elaborate ceremonial of a

feudal court; for if a poet may count it an honor to shake hands with a queen, there is no reason why a queen should not count it an honor to shake hands with a poet.

Two friends taking each other by the right hand, so that if either happens to stand a little higher he may lift the other to the same level, till they can look in each other's eyes and speak face to face—in a free country that is the ideal of friendly and courteous communing between Christian men and women.

Now Peter set the fashion for such good manners very early in the history of the Christian Church, when he took this cripple by the right hand. It is a good ecclesiastical fashion for any Church to cultivate, that clasping of hands. And if apostle may join hands with beggar, who may not with whom? And it does not appear in the narrative that the apostle waited for anybody to introduce him. Is it not pleasant to be shown one apostolic example which any of us might copy so simply and promptly, shaking hands in kindliness at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple of God?

But, of course, the mere bodily gesture, however significant, is not what interests us most. The outward visible sign in a sacrament stands for an inward spiritual grace, and the inward spiritual grace is the vitally important part of it. You

would get more help from a single look out of some kind eyes that you know of, than to have your hand wrung by some other people till your arm came off at the shoulder. The spiritual sentiment back of the bodily gesture is the vitally important thing. Now, for handshaking, that is a spirit of fellowship, of mutual helpfulness; it assumes a substantial equality between the two persons, a brotherhood. The things in which men happen to differ have been set one side, the things in which they are essentially the same are brought forward, while they are taking each other by the hand.

That is the spirit of Christianity; and can any other spirit cure the ills that afflict our world today? This spirit must control our charity. We hear much in these days of the harm that well-meaning people have often done in their attempts at charity; we hear of the injudicious giving which has bred pauperism, increasing the evils it was intended to cure. Evidently Peter's dealings with the cripple at the Temple gate brought about no such disastrous results. He found the man a helpless beggar; he took from him that helplessness which had been his stock in trade; he left him a well man, who could work, and must hereafter work or starve. That is the ideal helpfulness, and Peter accomplished all that by taking the man by the right hand.

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

We ought to be touching the world's wretchedness; but there are different ways of touching it. If the touch expresses on our part a kind of conscious condescension, and if it encourages on the other side a kind of obsequiousness; if the Church pictures herself as stooping to lay her hand benevolently upon the head of the wretched world, then we have only half learned our lesson, and the world in these democratic days will not accept that aristocratic gesture very gracefully. Ah, but when we have thoroughly learned the whole lesson that Christ came to teach, it will not appear then that we suppose we are to stoop to touch our inferiors; rather, the world will see us standing erect among our fellows, holding out a friendly, helpful hand; and that hand will not wait long in this world for another to grasp it.

That you are offering help, and that you are willing to receive it, that is the meaning of holding out the hand; it establishes a mutual relation at once. Suppose I am preaching the Gospel to a man, and showing him the path that has been shown me leading to the Celestial City, and hold out my hand; it means that I am offering my help to him in moving along that path; but I confess at the same instant that I want his help also, as if I said, "Two can walk better than one; come along." Anything like patronizing condescension is shut

out the moment we both of us offer to shake hands on the agreement. Is not that the gesture that is wanted everywhere?

If this spirit of Christian fellowship could only be breathed into all the social and industrial organizations of our modern world! Sometimes the business of a Western mining camp, or of a great city, will be interrupted, streets filled with riot, and some bloodshed; men dropping their work and losing their pay, and wives and children facing want; other men called from their work and their homes to carry arms; all because something has been wrong in the attitude of one set of men to another set of men; and the reason is, that these two sets of men, whose interests are really so vitally related, have so seldom thought of taking each other by the hand, shaking hands over the question, recognizing their fellowship of duty and interest, covenanting with each other in mutual helpfulness.

If I were starting a big business corporation that was to use large amounts of capital and furnish employment to large numbers of men, our text gives me an idea of a good corporate seal. It should be the figure of the president of the corporation and one of the workmen shaking hands, and so drawn that you must look carefully, and then would not feel quite sure which was president and which man;

both of them men, both of them offering help and asking it.

The recent movement in the Presbyterian Church, by which in many places ministers of the Church have been led to seek membership in labor unions, is of the very spirit of Christ. We often speak of our Lord's condescension, saying how far He stooped that He might touch us and help us. Certainly He did stoop far: "He chose us." But do you notice how Christ Himself, when He was on the earth, bore Himself toward men—never as if he wished them to be thinking how far He had stooped to them, and how generous He was to be helping them. He had chosen them; He was their Saviour and Lord; and yet how much of the time He was glad to let them help Him. He asked Peter to lend Him a boat; He asked a Samaritan woman to give Him a drink of water; He accepted the hospitality of publican and of Pharisee indiscriminately; He let the women of Galilee minister to Him on His journeys; He asked a friend in Jerusalem to lend Him a room in his house; He asked His disciples to watch by Him while He prayed; He would help them, and He asked them to help Him. The Son of God was always holding out His hand to men for this friendly grasp of mutual helpfulness.

He still does it; He still invites our co-operation

in the work He has undertaken. Whatever service we can render His brethren, He accepts it as rendered to Him. Even while He offers to acknowledge us, He is asking us to acknowledge Him. In all our relations to the Lord there is a kind of mutual friendliness, a broad human brotherhood; that is the wonder of this Christian religion. For He is really a King, and we were bowing low before Him; but He is not willing to stand off on His dignity; He is always lifting us up to His side, taking us by the right hand. He who did the choosing has chosen us to be His friends. And this same persistent friendliness toward others must be one of the fruits of our election.

CHAPTER VI

QUIETNESS

We are treating the subject of Christian ethics under the aspect of Divine election. Each duty of God's servant is dignified for us by the thought that God had particularly selected and appointed that particular man for the doing of that particular thing. The man's life is a plan of God. This being true, it might be natural to infer that duties so dignified by God's notice must be of an imposing character; that God's elect servant, therefore, must spend his days hurrying to and fro, seeking for some great thing to do, something that should seem worthy the Almighty's attention.

There could not be a more disastrous mistake; and to guard against it, let me bring forward the earlier part of the life of Jesus, who was the chosen of God. We learn about that earlier part of his life from two texts in the Gospel of Luke:—Luke ii, 42: "And when He was twelve years old;" Luke iii, 23: "And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age."

"Twelve"—"thirty"—between those two numbers come eighteen years of the life of Jesus, and

of those eighteen years we have no record; it is a period of silence.

The first thought about it that I would set before you is this, that the only perfect man, the well-beloved Son of God, could live among men for eighteen years without saying a word, or doing a thing, so far as we know, that should strike the attention of His neighbors, or cause His name to be known beyond the little hamlet in which He lived.

And the second thought that I would set before you is, that he himself never complained over this long-continued obscurity.

We have been taught that the mark of the prize of our high calling toward which we must ever press forward is likeness to Jesus Christ. The secret of Christian ethics is that we should walk in His steps, and take His life for our example; but a very large part of that example must come from these silent years before His baptism, when His higher mission had not yet appeared, and His neighbors knew Him simply as a son in the home, or a workman in the shop. We are apt to overlook those years altogether because they were so silent, but they are the larger part of His life, and the patient silence is just the example that they set before us.

Twelve years old, fifteen years old, twenty years old, twenty-five years old, twenty-six, twenty-sev-

en, twenty-eight, twenty-nine; the years of this most precious life running by so fast, and still He has found no more important work to do for the world than that within the reach of any competent artisan. The voice which had in it the power to speak as never man spake had found as yet no audience—unless it had been in the little synagogue prayer-meeting in Nazareth, when He took His turn with the others to read the Scripture lesson.

A life destined to be short—some three-and-thirty years altogether; a life-work destined to be so great—the founding of a new religion, and the saving of the world; and here thirty years have gone, and no grander field of labor than a carpenter's shop.

Oh, what a lesson of patience, and of willingness to do God's will and our own work faithfully, even though it be in an obscure and lowly station!

And how often many of us may need that lesson! If we felt it in us that we were made for larger things, could we have possessed our souls so long in patience in that little Galilean village? I fancy our neighbors might have found us complaining that so bright a light should have been hidden under so small a bushel. You might have found us travelling over to the city of Capernaum every half holiday in search of a better place than the village carpenter's shop. A thing not to be borne with,

that such sweetness as ours should be wasted on the desert air of Nazareth!

Oh, the next time we find ourselves tempted to such discontent for lack of appreciation; saying that so good a workman ought to be able to get better pay for his work, that so good a singer or performer ought to get more applause for his music, that so good a speaker ought to hold larger and more attentive audiences, that so good a writer ought to receive larger prices for his books—stop, friend, and think of those silent years in the life of the one man of all ages who was born to shine and rule; fifteen years old, twenty years old, twenty-five years old, thirty years old; the best part of His life would be gone so soon, and no chance yet to do anything that would cause His name to be remembered ten years after His life was ended.

May God teach us that lesson of patience in obscurity from the example of His well-beloved Son!

But surely the silence which rests upon those years is eloquent to teach another lesson. God's service naturally begins not with the tongue, but probably with the hands. The Creator furnished us all with two hands apiece, and two feet, and two eyes, and two ears, and only one tongue. Have we not twisted that proportion about somehow? I have sometimes thought that if we were to delineate a successful servant of God according to the

popular modern conception of him, it would matter little what we did with the other members, but we must be sure to give him at least as many tongues as the Creator has given us fingers.

Tell a young convert that he ought to be doing some service for his Lord, and ten chances to one he understands you to mean, of course, that he ought to fall at once to talking; and ten chances to one he has understood you correctly, for that is what you did mean; for really that seems the only kind of service of God that many of us are in the habit of thinking of—talking. What an amazing error! I have sometimes thought I should like to make my home for a season with a company of Christian deaf-mutes, to see whether I might not get cured of this error, and catch from them the habit of thinking that when the Lord bids a man to work for Him he probably means him to use first his two hands or his two feet.

Do you remember in the "Pilgrim's Progress" that conversation between Faithful and Talkative, and the remark of Talkative to Faithful?—"I thought we should have had a great deal of talk by this time." The moments when he was pursuing his journey toward the Celestial City in silence seemed to that man moments wasted. I wonder what such a pilgrim would have said to the first thirty years of Jesus' pilgrimage.

Suppose some young neighbor is converted, and comes some day to some wise counsellor like Faithful, and says, "Well, Faithful, I am going to be a Christian and serve the Lord."

"Thank God for that," says Faithful; "how are you going to serve him?"

"Well," the man answers, "that is what I came to talk to you about. I have been thinking of various things. I thought I might be a sort of evangelist or a pastor, or a Y. M. C. A. secretary, or a foreign missionary. I have come to consult with you about it."

"What fitness have you for any such work?" Faithful asks. "What do you know about this Word of God, that you propose now to preach it to others; what experience have you in teaching, or in public speaking of any sort?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about the Bible," the man answers; "I have been serving the devil all my life; I have not been inside a church for twenty years; but now the Lord has saved me, and I must serve Him, and I want to be at it quickly."

"What have you been working at before you were converted?" asks Faithful.

The man answers that he has been a carpenter, or tent-maker, or plumber, or bookkeeper, or banker, or merchant, or whatever it may be, mentioning some honest trade.

"Well," says Faithful, "I think your best beginning at serving Christ is to go straight back to your shop, and first let your fellow-workmen there know who your Master is now; and then keep before you in your work, day after day, the example of your Lord Himself in Nazareth, where He had been known among His neighbors simply as the carpenter till He was thirty years old, and who during all that time had perfectly pleased God. If the Lord has any other field of usefulness for you He will show it in due time after you have really filled that."

Ah, friends, if the Church of Christ could be enriched this week with a more plentiful sprinkling of that sort of faithful carpenters and plumbers and spinners and traders generally, who for His sake are doing their daily tasks as well as they can be done, do you not think it would help on the kingdom of God more than all the eloquence of what we call the sacred ministry for the last hundred years? It is to be noticed that Jesus could do all the public preaching that was required of Him in three short years; but thirty years seemed not too long a time to spend in the silent service that went before.

The question often comes up in the Protestant Church as to some fuller official recognition of the services rendered by women. Perhaps there ought

to be such recognition, but it is to be remembered that from the beginning the women have been by far the more influential part of our membership; they have more adequately and forcibly and persuasively represented to the world the real Gospel of Christ; and partly, I must believe, because they have been so still about it. Till now, at least, the believing women have been a living example of the fact that our Christian religion consists not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. No one has accused them of unwillingness to confess their Saviour when the time came to confess, for they have constituted always the large majority of His openly confessed followers, and their names are glorious in the lists of the martyrs. But our usual customs have not compelled them to be always lifting up their voices in the streets and putting their religion into noisy words. I confess, if now we are to crowd them all into our pulpits and platforms and other public positions, I fear it will break the charm; for if both sexes of us are to join the Sect of Talkatives, who will be left to stand evidently for the religion of deed and truth?

Thirty years of silent service. But we all feel that those thirty years of our Lord's life were also a time of preparation—preparation for the more public and glorious ministry at the close of His life. I suppose, if we could see the whole, we should

know that every true service faithfully rendered is a preparation for something larger some time. To the servant faithful in a few things, his Lord is always saying, "I will put thee over many things." But have you ever thought of the specific preparation for Christ's work as a preacher, that was going on in those earlier years of silence? He was "increasing in wisdom." This man, who was content to be known simply as a carpenter, was all the time perfecting Himself in knowledge of the three great departments of human study: nature, man, God.

A carpenter. But his eyes were open to the wonders of the natural world, which are free to all who have eyes to see, but which so many of us have no eyes to see. We know, by what appears afterward, that He had considered the lilies of the field, and found more joy in their simple beauty than any courtier in the magnificence of his king. He had watched the little mustard-seed spreading up bravely toward the dignity of a tree. He had grieved with the farmer over the tares multiplying in the field of wheat; He knew the ways of the sheep, and how they recognized the voice of their own shepherd; His nature was moved by the glories of the light and the mysteries of the dark. It was by no sudden gift of insight, we may be sure, that, when Jesus at last opened His lips to speak, He was able to charm the ears of men for all time with

those parables of nature; but from the beginning He had been increasing in that wisdom. For thirty years His mind had been storing itself with that wealth of illustration from God's works in nature.

And the knowledge of man. What a store of that kind of knowledge He could draw upon when He wished! The wedding procession; the unjust judge; the importunate widow, who gains her case at last; the games of children in the market-place; the joy of finding that makes large amends for the pain of losing; the dissipated son running away from his father; the father, lonely, watching; the penitence; the joyous home-coming. Really, all the poets, painters, and historians together could hardly tell us so much about the life and customs of a historic period as Jesus has told us about the life of those days in Palestine through the imagery of a few simple parables. And that knowledge of men, be sure, did not all come to Him after He began to preach. There was a carpenter in Nazareth who had eyes to see, and a heart to feel with men, and who for thirty years before He was publicly known had been increasing in that kind of wisdom.

It may cheer us also to remember, friends, that this was a part of Christ's apprenticeship to the office of High Priest over us, merciful and faithful, and able to be touched with a feeling of our infirmi-

ties. Tempted in all points as we are; tempted not only in that dramatic temptation scene in the wilderness, not only in the anguish of the Garden, but tempted as a child in the home, as a pupil learning to read, as a lad learning his trade, as a tradesman in his work, as a private citizen of Nazareth; tempted in all points as we are, though without sin. For thirty years he had been gaining a knowledge of men that would fit him for the work of saving men.

And then the knowledge of God. Do you suppose it was by some sudden gift or grace of continuance that Jesus was able afterward at times of crisis to spend the whole night in prayer? Ah, no; there was a carpenter in Nazareth who had learned how to pray; who had found for Himself, and therefore could afterward commend to others, a closet into which He could enter and shut the door, and there pray to the Father that seeth in secret.

He had been gaining knowledge of God, too, as He has revealed Himself through His word. When at last Jesus shall open His lips to quote from Moses and the prophets, men would wonder whether anyone had ever really read those sacred books before. It was a new revelation. Already as a child of twelve years, one day in the Bible School in the Temple at Jerusalem he surprised all by the wisdom of His questions and answers.

But from the Temple he went home to Nazareth to "increase in wisdom," to get more wisdom. We do not know just how much He knew of the Scriptures when He was twelve years old, but we have means of judging what He knew about the Scriptures by the time He was thirty years old. The Christian Church has been trying ever since, and trying in vain, to catch up with what knowledge He had then attained, this carpenter of Nazareth, who had succeeded in living in that small town all those thirty years without attracting men's attention to Himself as in any way remarkable.

Ah, friends, we complain sometimes of our own mean and narrow lives, with their niggardly opportunities and their irksome tasks; we look enviously at others, students at the great universities, travellers visiting distant countries, others mingling with the mighty and learned and powerful in the great world. But what riches of learning and culture are offered to all of us, if we would only look at God's common works with eyes like those of the carpenter in Nazareth; if we would mingle among common men and women with a heart responsive as was His to their common experiences of sorrow and joy and need; if we would study, as he studied, this sacred book which opens so freely to us all. I would not speak slightingly of colleges, and advantages of travel, and cultured society;

they have their value; but one loses confidence in the supreme importance of all such accidents of fortune when he remembers that the Teacher of the ages received His education as a carpenter in a country village in Galilee.

Eighteen years of silence. I do not mean that Jesus never spoke to anyone through those years, but He made no noise; it appears that His words at that time claimed no public attention. He was not yet known to His neighbors as the speaker or reader or teacher, but as the carpenter. And even His life of holy deeds caused no great stir in the community. It seems to me wonderfully interesting that a perfectly holy life could have been lived for so many years in a little place like Nazareth, and no one had taken special note of it. It shows what a simple and natural thing goodness may be; nothing pretentious about it, nothing portentous about it. It fits in very harmoniously with the other fair works of God, as beautiful, but as natural and unnoticed as one of those lilies of the field which He himself delighted to consider. Nazareth was not a place distinguished for saintliness in those days; quite the other way; it was of an unsavory reputation; and yet even in disreputable Nazareth a man could live a perfectly holy life, pleasing God by every word and thought and deed, and nobody paid heed to it. They had learned to

take goodness for granted from Him. Patience and purity and truth and kindness and reverence seemed a matter of course with Him. They no more wondered at His holiness than that the sky was blue and the scent of the flowers sweet.

Can we not find a cheering, serviceable work-day, every-day example in these earlier years of Jesus? We profess to be following in His steps, but sometimes wonder how we are to set about it; for the most of us are not called to be apostles, not called to make much noise in the world, or to hold high positions before the people; but that does not shut off any of us from walking in the steps of Jesus. Everyone in the great silent majority may take his example from the larger part of His life, those years in Nazareth. And even the few whom God sets in more conspicuous positions would do well to reflect that, if they follow Jesus, the larger side of their lives, too, must be the silent side, the side that is common to them with the great silent majority.

The same apostle who has taught us most of what we know about the doctrine of election, and who himself was always pressing "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling," has also left it as a general rule of life that we "study to be quiet." [1]

[1] I Thessalonians iv, 11.

That is the great example coming down to us from the larger part of the life of Jesus, from those quiet years in Nazareth.

And even His public ministry completed itself at last in a second teaching of the same lesson of quietness. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." [1]

The last lesson that the Son of God taught us at His trial and crucifixion was a lesson of patient quietness. To be able to fill a humble place with patience, because God has called you to it—there is no more beautiful fruit of our election than that.

[1] I Peter ii, 21–23.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND MILE

Our study of the Christian calling has brought us to an examination of the general subject of Christian ethics. But early in this examination the question confronts us, What must be added to the ethical ideals that men had commonly held to justify us in applying to them the adjective "Christian"? That something must be added, appears from such sayings of Christ as "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,"[1] or "What do ye more than others?"[2] or "A new commandment I give unto you."[3] Such sayings imply some distinctive peculiarity in the duties to which Christ calls his disciples. We are much interested to learn what the peculiarity is. The Sermon on the Mount consists largely of an answer to this question, and I select for the subject of the present chapter one of the more striking of its utterances, the forty-first verse of the fifth chapter of Matthew: "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain."

This sermon, so-called, is in many ways more like

[1] Matthew v, 20. [2] Matthew v, 47. [3] John xiii, 34.

a poem. The doors to its treasure-house will not open to a reader of prosaic spirit. "Give to him that asketh," our Lord says; but that does not mean that you must give a dagger to every would-be assassin or suicide, or that you must yield to all the solicitings of temptations; or that when your child asks of you a scorpion, thinking it an egg, you must give him the scorpion. "Swear not at all," Christ said; and yet He Himself consented to be put on oath in the High Priest's palace, that He might declare Himself the Son of God. So here He says, "Go with him two miles." That does not mean that because some neighbor happens to want your company for twenty minutes, you must force yourself upon him, whether he wants you or not, for the rest of the day. No, no; the letter killeth. We must not murder these richest and most beautiful of all teachings with such slavish literalism. Let us open our heart wide to what the Lord is patiently urging upon us, when He says, "Go with him two miles;" namely, that we should be more willing to serve our neighbor than he can be to force any service from us—twice as willing.

Here is a needy world surrounding us, and always tugging at us with its persistent appeals; but Christ says that the active, expansive good-will in His follower's heart must be enough to fill and overflow all these demands from the world. The

push outward from within must be twice as strong as the pull from without. So He puts it to us in this vividly expressive figure, "If the man is compelling you to go with him one mile, go with him, of your own accord, two miles."

The servants of Christ quickly learned to obey the command. There was a poor lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and he asked an alms of Peter and John. "Bakshish," he said, as his successors are saying to-day in the same locality; and if you toss the very smallest kind of coin to that beggar you have met his utmost expectation; the mile that he was compelling you to go was very short. Peter's desire of good for that beggar was a stronger force than the beggar's desire of good from Peter, and so, looking him in the eye, he took him by the hand, and said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And the man is healed of his lameness, and soon you see him entering with them into the Temple, walking and leaping and praising God. He had asked them to go with him one mile, but they went with him twain; and the second part of the journey was very much longer than the first. That is a good lesson in the Christian treatment of beggars.

How often these beggars had asked help from Jesus Himself, the blind and the lame coming to

Him that they might be healed of the bodily infirmity; and often He would heal them, thus going with them the first mile; but how often he would say also, "Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee," healing the spiritual disease as well as the bodily, thus going with them twice as far as they had thought of asking his company. Let the greediest beggar in the world ask all that he could from Jesus Christ, the desire that breathed through that beggar's request was not half so strong as the desire in the heart of Jesus Christ to do that beggar good. That is the rule that He commends to us His disciples in all our bearing toward a needy world. We must be more anxious, twice as anxious, to do them good, as they are to get good from us. The old doctrine of works of supererogation was a doleful error, but an error that came near being a blessed Christian truth.

Suppose I am a man who have large amounts of money at my disposal; but I am also a Christian; that is, I am taking my rules of life from Jesus, listening for His call. Now, some of my neighbors desire their benefit out of that money, and how much pains they take to get it! Every day my mail is full of their plaintive appeals; my door-bell is always ringing for their solicitations. There are considerable numbers of my fellow-citizens who seem to be devoting themselves to nothing else than

to get hold of that money of mine for the relief of some real or imaginary need in the community. I was about to lose my temper over their intolerable importunity. But now I hear the voice of my Master, and he is saying to me: "Be patient; you yourself must take twice as much pains to get that money of yours into useful service as all these others are taking. Your impulse to give ought to be twice as strong as their impulse to get; whenever they are trying to compel you to go with them one mile, you must go with them twain."

So, if it were culture that a man possessed, or if it were great literary genius, or professional attainments in the law or medicine, or rare political ability—whatever it is—the community about you demands its advantage out of that one peculiar talent of yours; but however much the world may want to get this good thing from you, you ought to want twice as much to give this good thing to the world. If a man is a true disciple or learner from Jesus, it will come to be that man's one serious business in life to make every such distinguishing advantage of his serve the common good. His Master has chosen him to that office. No matter how clamorous the needy world might be to be blessed by this man, there is a far more consuming passion in the man himself to bless the world. That is our rule; its meaning is very plain: "If anyone compel

you to go one mile, of your own accord go with him two."

We are concerned now with that second mile, and I would insist that it is far the pleasanter part of the journey. Here is a man who asks you for something, and you do just what he asks; well, he makes little of that. It was what he had expected, and is taken as a matter of course. But suppose you surprise him with something beyond what he has expected, something that he really needed, but would not have thought of asking from you; then you touch his heart more deeply; you have given far more pleasure to him and won vastly more of his gratitude by that second mile than the first; you also take more pleasure yourself; the second mile is really the delightful part of the journey to both of you. So a friend once told me, and it has seemed to me that he was right. In all departments of life, the beauty and poetry and joy of life are to be found very largely in that second mile.

Take it in the common relations of friendship, for instance. There will be certain forms of courtesy and respect which my friend must render me if he is to remain my friend. He knows that I could compel these from him under penalty of forfeiting my friendship altogether. So they constitute the first compulsory mile of our friendly journey; and never let it be forgotten, this mile

must remain first; no other part of the road can be substituted for that. This habitual courtesy is the basis of everything; it cannot be relinquished. If you have to take your choice, you would far rather have this from your friend than some unexpected whimsical extravagance of affection to-day, followed by rude neglect to-morrow. Never forget that we must travel that first mile first. Oh, but the friendship will mean so much more to us both if it leads us often beyond that first mile and into the second; if, in addition to all these habitual courtesies which might almost be reckoned up for years ahead, our friendship often blossoms into unplanned and unexpected acts of tenderness, overflowing with impulsive good-will. The second mile is the delightful part of the journey of friendship.

So it is with the kind offices rendered in our homes. Here is a son, and dependent upon him an aged, helpless father. There are certain forms of provision for that father's comfort which rest upon the son as an evident duty. You could compel him to render them, by the constraining power of public opinion, and sometimes by the law of the land. According to his ability he must devote so much of his time and so much of his money to the old man's comfort. That is the one mile which he must travel; and nothing could excuse him for neg-

lecting this established custom of filial obedience. And yet, does not the father hunger for something besides that customary methodical respect and care? Is he not specially gladdened by unlooked-for words of affection and deeds of kindness, which prove that the son's love, always filling its appointed channel, must often overflow the banks, a veritable flood of good-will? I tell you, it is the second mile that turns that observance of the fifth commandment from slavish duty into one of the choicest luxuries.

And so of wedded love, the love of husband and wife. Oh, there was a time at the beginning of their journey together when it seemed to these two lovers that nearly all the journey might be travelled in the second mile. And in those days, you know, the hours seemed too few and too short for all the happiness that was crowding itself into them; for these two were continually contriving to surprise each other with unexpected attentions. But at last, perhaps, the time comes when those attentions have been forgotten; when husband and wife, careful and troubled about other things, are content to do for each other only what the law compels, and sometimes barely that, travelling always in the first mile of compulsion. Oh, what a weary and doleful journey it sometimes grows to be! and yet the joy is only just ahead, if they would quicken their pace

a little. How many a home now dark and desolate would be flooded with sunshine to-day, if only these two unhappy souls would heed this kindly counsel from Jesus, "If he compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Accept the office to which He elects you; push on into that second mile of unexpected kindnesses and courtesies, and the dusty desert about you will be transformed into a very Paradise of the Lord; once more "the earth is filled with flowers, and the time of the singing of the birds is come."

Do you not see how kindly a rule it is that our Lord has laid upon us by His precept and by His example? for He was always hastening forward into that second mile. So long as we do all our travelling in the first mile, paying out grudgingly only what we can be compelled to give, doing reluctantly only what we can be compelled to do, life is a kind of treadmill. We are like Bryant's galley slave, scourged through his task while the day lasts, and at night scourged back to his dungeon; and while this is true, every commandment of the law in turn becomes a painful bondage. The seventh commandment fetters together two unhappy prisoners, who are always thinking how much happier they might be apart. The eighth commandment pinions a man's hands, that he may not take his neighbor's goods for which he hankers. The fifth command-

ment compels an unwilling obedience from children to parents. The fourth commandment compels us grudgingly to relinquish for one day in the week all the things that we particularly wanted to do. And so the whole law is a fetter to us; the world is a kind of prison. We would like to break the fetter, if we dared, and escape from the prison, and sometimes we do; but our occasional experiments at lawlessness bring us so much trouble—the way of the transgressor is so hard—that we find it safer generally to keep the commandments, or most of them, after a fashion; but it is with sluggish and grumbling obedience. We are like the cheap, inferior workman, his eye always on the clock, who gives the scantiest work that the overseer can force him to give; and so he makes his shop a purgatory and his whole task a drudgery. Our whole life is that, if we spend our days in that first mile of the journey, never travelling beyond the point to which someone else can compel us to go.

Now Christ's rule, this calling by which He calls us, will take us as quickly as possible out of that dismal region, and into the other region, where everything will be just as you want it to be, the fetters shaken off and the treadmill exchanged for a holiday; where the bored workman becomes an artist, loving his work and pressing on toward per-

fection in it; where "the whining school-boy, creeping like snail unwillingly to school," becomes the scholar hungry to learn; and so in every relation of life, as parents and children, masters and servants, buyers and sellers, friends, lovers, the ready performance shall outrun the irksome obligation, becoming free and glad. That is the Christian liberty to which we are called. Oh, if I could claim my full share in it! If I could make up my mind to go those two miles, it will no longer disturb me that some troublesome neighbor might have compelled me to go one mile. As Dr. George Alexander has said in an admirable sermon on this text: "the way, the only way, to lift the burden of compulsory service, is to do voluntarily more than you are required to do."

"Whosoever shall compel thee to go." The word translated "compel" is of Persian origin; it refers to a custom coming down from the days of Cyrus the Great. There used to be royal couriers stationed at particular points on the great roads of the empire, waiting to transmit the King's messages from one to another, and so convey them as speedily as possible from the palace even to the remotest parts of the great empire. And the law was that, in case of need, these couriers—*angaroi*, as the name was—could press into their service anyone and anything they met, horses, vessels, men; and

they called this angariating them; that is the word in our text: "Whosoever shall angariate thee one mile, go with him twain."

Evidently such a practice could be made very burdensome by a despotic government. It was like the old press-gang for recruiting the British navy; or like the dragonade from which the French Protestants suffered so much in the days of Louis XIV. Now the Romans had borrowed the old word from the old Persians to describe a similar custom among themselves, and this duty of furnishing posts for the Roman Government was a particularly irksome duty to the Jews; and so when Jesus, speaking to an audience of Jews, used this phrase, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile"—"whosoever shall angariate thee one mile"—at once they would think of this peculiarly hateful form of Roman oppression.

Here is an honest son of Abraham travelling along the road with his beast, on some worthy errand of his own; and suddenly a troop of soldiers swoop down upon him and force him off on this errand for the Government; and the Government was that hated foreign king or emperor at Rome. To these Jewish hearers it seemed an intolerable hardship that anyone should compel them to run errands for the Roman tyrant. But that was the picture set before their minds by the first part

of our Lord's saying. "Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile."

Before long Christ would be sending some of these very men with messages, royal messages, making them His ambassadors to the world. It may well be that at first some of the messengers were reluctant to start—like that rich young ruler in the Gospel history whom Jesus once invited to join the company of His immediate disciples; but the young man would not come, for the terms of admission seemed to him too hard, and he went away sorrowful.

But even those who came may have come at first with some degree of reluctance. His sayings were "hard sayings," they said; and the path in which he led them seemed a path of much self-denial, and the service costly. The compulsion that started these servants of Christ on their long journey of service seemed cruel and oppressive.

Why, even the old Hebrew prophets had sometimes found the message with which they were charged a very heavy burden. Moses shrank back from that formidable errand into Egypt; and Jonah was so eager to escape from the compulsion that was driving him to Nineveh, that he tried to run away to Spain. But no Hebrew prophet had ever been despatched on so long or so formidable an errand as would confront these disciples when

their Lord should say to them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." It was a long mile that He compelled them to go, a burdensome office to which He elected them.

Now, that command has never been repealed, but rests upon the conscience of the Christian Church to-day. Unless we would be disobedient to our King, we can be compelled to go this same mile on which the apostles were sent; and the mile seems a very long one to travel—"to the uttermost parts of the earth." Many a disciple has complained that that command resting on the Church is hard to obey. At each new presentation of this infinitely varied appeal from the world—city missions, home missions, foreign missions, whatever it may be—we sometimes feel as if the soldiers of the old Persian or Roman despot were swooping down upon us, tearing us away from all our own pleasure and our own work, and forcing us into this unwelcome errand. We go, perhaps, a little way, but it is with reluctant steps, and with many complaints. We find small pleasure in the journey; anyone can see that, unless we felt compelled, we would not go at all. Our Master seems to us an austere man, and his service hard.

Oh, but that is because we are travelling still in the first mile. Our gracious Master, if only we

would let Him guide us, would have brought us long ago into that second mile of Christian service, where the slavish compulsion changes to freedom and gladness; where you get out of the dull prose of it into the poetry and beauty and sentiment; out of the treadmill into the holiday; out of the desert into the Paradise. His rule is, "whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain." A very little observation has shown that to be a good rule in other relations of life; in our study, in our daily labor, in human friendship and love. Why should it not be a good rule also in our religion? If the Lord Himself is compelling thee to go one mile, go with Him twain. It is that second mile—it is those things that you do freely and gladly, beyond the reach of compulsion—it is the unexpected attentions and courtesies to your Master, that will make your whole service fruitful and glad.

"Go with him twain," it says. "*With Him;*" and until you get into that second mile I think you would hardly know that you were travelling with your Master. When religion was only a matter of compulsion—when you gave only what you were compelled to give, did only what you could be compelled to do, prayed only when you could be compelled to pray, went only when you could be compelled to go—in those days you seemed to be travelling sadly alone. And the Lord, who had sent

you on that sad journey, seemed to you distant and foreign and tyrannical—almost as the Roman Cæsar himself seemed to these miserable Jewish subjects; so that your religion itself remained a kind of dragonnade.

Oh, but the moment you begin to render any of these Christian services freely, because you love to do it, because His loving service for you has made you love Him, so that you now outrun the constraint in your own desire to please Him, in that second mile have you not sometimes found the King himself your fellow-traveller? He himself seems to enjoy that part of the road and that kind of company, and has often elected to make Himself known to that kind of messengers. It is His own chosen rule, and it is as good a rule in religion as in ethics, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him—*with him* twain." In giving you that commandment He elects you to the honor of making this journey with Him.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UPPER ROOM

We are still following out this subject of election to its issue in duty, and have been confronted by the question, What must be added to the common ethical ideals of men to justify us in applying to them the adjective "Christian"? Our last chapter found materials for an answer in our Lord's saying about "the second mile," a saying from the Sermon on the Mount. The subject is important enough to warrant repeated illustration, and we may find further materials for an answer to the same question in what our Lord said to His two disciples when He sent them into the city to prepare for the eating of the passover. They would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water, and were to follow him into the house where he entered in. And then they should say to the good man of the house, "The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared; there make ready."[1]

There have been many good men whom one

[1] Mark xiv, 13, 14.

would like to have known, but not many better worth knowing, I think, than this nameless householder of Jerusalem. At a time when all men were forsaking our Lord, He looked to this one trusted friend for the one favor He most desired before His death. That favor was a place of safety, where undisturbed He might eat the passover with His disciples. That favor was had through this good man's hospitality, and that hospitality has put us all in his debt. To him we owe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper itself; and the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of John's Gospel.

Our Lord reposed perfect confidence in this man's hospitable temper. He must have known the man's heart well. Even at this time, when other friends were failing, and Peter was about to deny, Jesus knew that if His messengers should say to this nameless friend, "Where is the guest-chamber for the Master?" his answer would be to show them a large upper room furnished.

There is a wonderfully choice flavor to this act of hospitality. You observe, the messengers were not directed to ask for this large upper room, but only for the guest-chamber; and that meant the public room, the *katalyma,* the loosing-place, where travellers would throw off their cloaks and sandals, the hallway. At Passover time, by Jewish custom, al-

most any stranger could claim from any householder this guest-chamber for observing the feast. "Ask the good man for that," says our Lord to His messengers.

But Jesus knew that this particular host would never be content to give so small a boon. "He will show you, not the common, noisy hallway or courtyard of his establishment, but a large upper room, the best in the house, most honorable, most retired —a large upper room, furnished. There make ready."

What a fine example that is of loving devotion; to anticipate and surpass any demand that our Lord would make upon us! Is not that the instinctive desire of a consecrated Church? Everywhere, if He had asked the last, we would rather make haste to give Him the first.

If it were of our time,—the seventh day God had required from His ancient people, the last day of the week. But the Christian Church was constrained, without waiting for express orders, to offer rather the first day of the week as holy to the Lord. So the sacrament used to be a supper, celebrated at the evening hour. I like to find a pleasant signficance in the fact that almost the entire church has instinctively made the sacrament a morning meal; not the last hours of the day, when we are most weary, but, if possible, the first, when

we are fresh, we would set apart for that communion service.

And so in all things, a grateful and devoted heart would feel ashamed to wait until the last, rendering to the Lord only what He then exacts from us. Let us volunteer the first, rather, the large upper room; for if, in the press of occupants, anyone is to be crowded down into the common hallway, or even out of the door, it must not be He.

But I fear it is often the other way with us. Some Christian duty knocks, and we open the door a little before it; we do not actually shut the supplicant out; we do not put up the bars and fasten the bolts against him; no, we open the door a little, and say, "Come in, if you can find any room, but the house is pretty full."

The Lord has asked us for some of our time, it may be, and we do not refuse Him. If any time is left over from our other engagements, He may have it. But really we cannot give Him much encouragement, so crowded for time as we are. What with business all day long,—you would not have a man neglect his honest work; and social engagements all the evening—you would not have a man neglect his friends; and then some time for enjoyments at home—you would not have a man neglect his wife and children;—are not all of these a part of our Christian duty? and altogether we cannot

give the Lord much encouragement that there will be any time left over specially for Him; but if He can find any, He is welcome to it; the public hallway of our leisure is His, if He can push in. Oh, what a good thing it would be if, in the ordering of our time, we could have the grace to set apart that large upper room specially for Him! so that whoever might be crowded down into the space about the door, He should have always all that He wanted of our time; so that any sort of religious engagement, whether with our fellow-Christians or with Him alone, should be regularly the previous engagement. Some men, some busy men, have ordered it so. They have so understood the honor of their high calling.

Sometimes the Lord's cause makes its claim upon our money, and here also few Christians would give Him a decided refusal. When Christian Charity raises her voice and appeals to us, as we sit at ease in our comfortable upper room, we do not rush to the front door to bar it against her. At her gentle request for gifts, we do not shout back, "I will not give!" But perhaps some of us are accustomed to look out of the window when Charity knocks, and tell her that the door is unfastened, and that if she can find a place for herself among the other claimants down near the hallway she is welcome to come in. But she seems not to relish that company of

noisy beggars and duns, and soon betakes herself elsewhere. Her gentle tones have small chance to be heard among those strident voices. We boast of this as the age of almost gigantic liberality; and it is, in a way; it makes one giddy to read the long columns of figures of money received for our various charities. But did you ever condense those columns of figures into a lump, and then compare the sum total of them with the nation's drink bill, or what we spend in building railroads every year, or in digging tunnels and building bridges, or in any one of a hundred other items of expenditure?

And then, in our personal expenditures; why, I have no doubt that many a Christian man, who supposes that his own contributions to charity make quite a colossal figure, would think it a deplorable hardship if he himself were restricted to the same figure for some small pet indulgence of his own, his horses, or his clubs, or his cigars. And yet he will tell you that he is always giving. It seems to him that these clamorous demands are always at his door, pounding there perpetually, and leaving him no rest. When times are good, he lets them in, after they have pounded long enough—those of them that can get in; when times are bad, they are mostly squeezed out. But in good times and bad times alike that man himself sits in his own upper room, and finds the table spread with the same

abundance for his own wants. Unless his house should actually fall to pieces about his ears, you will notice that good times and bad times make scarcely any difference with his own personal daily comfort.

Oh, that more of us would dedicate to the Lord, and always reserve for Him, that quiet upper chamber of our income, to which this disturbing question of good times and bad times is not admitted; meeting the claims of His cause first; not letting Him have what is left over, but rather reserving for ourselves what is left over.

It was so with that householder of Jerusalem; he would eat his own supper in the court-yard, if need be, or on the doorstep, but his Divine guest must have His supper undisturbed. Speaking of hosts and guests, has it ever occurred to you how much greater consideration most of us show to those whom we call our guests than we have ever learned to show to Him whom we call our God? Some day a friend arrives at your door to spend a few days with you. When dinner-time comes, do you and your family make haste to seat yourselves at the table, remarking to him that you are sorry the table is not large enough for another plate, but that if he will wait a little there may be something left over? When night comes, do you tuck your children and yourself into bed,

shouting from the stairs, just before you turn off the light, that you are sorry the house has no spare bed-room left, but that if he can find his way in the dark, there is a sofa somewhere in the back parlor to which he is welcome? Not a bit of it. If the house is over-crowded, two or three of the children must make one bed big enough to hold them all; or you will experiment with that narrow sofa yourself; but your guest—so far from leaving him to feel the pressure, you studiously keep from him all knowledge of the fact that any pressure exists; and woe to the unlucky youngster who at breakfast next morning lets slip the information that anyone had been put to inconvenience through the night!

Now, if we could all learn to treat our God with that kind of courteous consideration—this Divine guest—for it is what He calls himself, a guest, "one who stands at the door and knocks." If we could all hasten to Him with hospitable welcome; not leaving Him to feel His way into the crowd about the entrance, but leading Him at once to that large upper room furnished and waiting for Him. For certainly the Divine Spirit is a very sensitive visitor in the human soul, easily grieved away. It is true that while He stood knocking without He was long-suffering, that He endured rebuffs innumerable, offering men His heavenly gifts with unwearied importunity; but having been once re-

ceived into the soul, He must then be treated with the consideration due an honored guest, else He will not stay there. God's grace will never abide in a man's heart in the character of an intruder; He will never wear out the welcome. At the very first sign of weariness or impatience from the host the heavenly visitor is gone, and we may not soon see His face beneath our roof again.

Might not this explain the barrenness and joylessness of many a Christian's religious life? An unhappy day came when we let it appear that the Lord had outstayed His welcome. We did not actually turn Him out of the door, but we did let it appear that the task of entertaining Him was something of a burden to us. Those hours that we once gave gladly to communion with Him had been contracted to a few hurried minutes; those many thoughtful attentions which once proved our reverent love for Him, and our joy at having Him with us, were now forgotten. As our Lord said to the Pharisee who once furnished Him a dinner: "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: . . . thou gavest me no kiss; . . . my head with oil thou didst not anoint."[1] Simon allowed Jesus to eat at his table, but the sensitive spirit of the guest had been wounded at the lack of hearty welcome; and no matter how good the fare,

[1] Luke vii, 44 ff.

you may be sure the Lord did not stay beneath that roof for breakfast. No; the house at which Jesus was willing to remain was that of a man like Zaccheus, who made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully; and proved his sense of the honor done his home by that magnificent largess: "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor."[1] Or it might be a household like that at Bethany, where Mary sat at his feet in rapt attention, and heard His word; and where even poor Martha, cumbered with much serving, had erred through her wish to do him honor.[2]

Yes, Christ, while He stood without, knocked persistently at men's hearts, offering them salvation as if He would not take No for an answer; but when once we propose to admit Him, opening the door, then how often His former importunity seems changed to sensitive reluctance; as when the risen Jesus, when He had joined Himself as a stranger to the two on their way to Emmaus, and blessed them with His wonderful conversation, yet when supper-time approached and they drew nigh to the village whither they went, He would not seem to take their hospitality for granted, but made as if He would have gone farther; and they must constrain Him, adding argument to invitation—

[1] Luke xix, 1–10.
[2] Luke x, 38–42.

"Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent,"—before He would go in to tarry with them, revealing Himself their ever-present Lord.[1]

Ah, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God! Never let it seem for a moment that the heavenly visitant is an intruder in your home, in your heart, in your life. Prove it rather your one great joy to have Him with you, and the cost or inconvenience to yourself a trifle not worth mentioning, a privilege, something you were glad to do. The large upper room, let that stay furnished for Him. Accept eagerly the office of host to which he elects you.

If one were speaking to those who are still just entering upon the joys and efforts of life, almost the whole of it apparently still before them, oh, let them not think of putting the Lord off with the closing years, that little section that may be left over after they have made all the money and honor they want for themselves, and have had all the pleasure they can hold. Give Him the best now, the first, these earliest, freshest years, these brightest hopes, these most vigorous endeavors. If you would know what it is to be blessed with that Divine company, constrain the Lord now, before He goes farther, to come in and accept from you His choice of all the best you have.

[1] Luke xxiv, 28, 29.

It was my privilege once to use this text and course of thought as an introduction to an appeal for an offering for foreign missions; and I think there is no other kind of appeal that brings the tones of the Master Himself more distinctly to a Christian congregation. In much of our religious and charitable work natural sentiment, and even self-interest, come in to re-enforce our Christian principle. We might be doing the same thing for other reasons if we were not Christians at all. But this work of supplying the Gospel of Christ to distant unknown races of men is the one thing which we almost certainly would not attempt except for His sake, and through motives of obedience to Him. Our response to this appeal will show, better than almost anything else, perhaps, how we are disposed to treat Him for His own sake, when He comes up to our door alone.

Blessings await that elect Church, or that elect Christian, who on hearing such a summons makes haste to open the large upper room, ready and furnished.

That disciple of old whose soul was most susceptible to the honor and the significance of the divine election became by a gracious necessity the Apostle to the Gentiles, the great missionary of the early Church. That great doctrine of election which the Church has been studying ever since

from his lips was for him little more than a chapter from his own religious experience; and the practical and inevitable outcome of the doctrine for the man himself was that imperial ambition to preach among the nations everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ. He must preach at Antioch, Galatia, Macedonia, Greece, Rome, Spain; the call by which his Lord had honored him had put him in debt to all men everywhere; and he could know no rest until that debt was paid. We have been asking what you must add to the common ethical ideals of men to make them Christian, or what is the distinctive peculiarity of the duties to which Christ elects His disciples, and I do not believe you can find anywhere a more illuminating answer than the personality of this man himself, this missionary, Paul.

CHAPTER IX

WALKING WITH GOD

We have been dwelling upon the thought that God's election of men is to service. The election imposes grave responsibility; and to whom much is given, of him shall much be required.

Nevertheless, it remains true that when God chooses a man He is showing him the greatest possible favor. The election is to service truly; but the service itself is a high privilege, and, when faithfully rendered, brings also great recompense of reward.

It would not be right to close our study of this scriptural theme without furnishing some clear statement of the favor involved in the choice of God. The favor, as the last two chapters have prepared us to expect, is nothing less than the fellowship of God Himself for time and for eternity. The service to which He elects His chosen ones is a co-operation with Himself; and the reward is His continued presence. "I am continually with thee," cries the Psalmist, speaking for all elect souls everywhere; "thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and

afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forever more."[1]

So our Lord incorporates this entire doctrine of the Divine call in His parable, when He says of the shepherd, "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."[2] Paul also ends his rhapsody on the glories of the elect by declaring his persuasion that "neither death, nor life, . . . nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[3] The high privilege, therefore, to which God chooses men is nothing less than eternal fellowship with Himself.

My little book shall close with two scriptural representations of this privilege, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New. That from the Old Testament is found in the book of Genesis, the twenty-fourth verse of the fifth chapter: "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him."

[1] Ps. lxxiii, 23–25; xvi, 11.
[2] John x, 3, 4.
[3] Rom. viii, 38, 39.

The New Testament is largely a book of doctrine and of action, revealing the truths that we need to know concerning God; and also painting the picture of a life of active service, the life of Jesus first, and then of His disciples. The picture shows the outside of these lives, but we often long to know more about their inner history, their secret temptations, conflicts, prayers, victories. Generally we have to guess at that part of the story. Paul's phrase, "things which it is unlawful for a man to utter," seems to express the feeling of all the New Testament saints about that side of their life which "is hid with Christ in God."

Now, is not this one reason why God has caused those books of the Old Testament to be bound up into one Bible with the books of the New? Because the Old does often tell that other part of the story; —in the Psalms, for instance; it opens out the hidden side of a good man's life and growth, and often tells us much more about him, and what he thinks, and what he fears, and what he hopes, and what at last he begins to believe, than about what he visibly does. Those earlier narratives have the transparency of childhood; and just as a child, or an older person whose mind retains still the immaturity and simplicity of childhood, can open his heart to us and tell his inner experiences in a way that becomes impossible after a certain degree of mental and

spiritual culture, so the saints of the Old Testament lay their hearts bare before us, when the saints of the New would draw a veil of reserve, almost of embarrassment over their own private experiences, talking only of the divine truth of the Gospel on the one side, or the active work that awaits our hand on the other.

So, as often as we want those unreserved testimonies and stories of inner life, we all turn back to these older books, this Bible of the children. Here are men who have not learned yet to suppress anything. It is still natural for them to cry out when they are hurt, to laugh when they are pleased, to talk aloud with God Himself whenever they meet Him, so that whoever will may overhear the conversation.

This patriarch Enoch, what a strange biography we have of him! It tells so little. Where did he live? What did he do? Was he rich, or poor, honored, or persecuted? Not one syllable of information is furnished. You can fill out the picture of his long earthly life almost as you choose. The only thing that the sacred writer thinks it worth while to mention about that ancient saint's earthly career is that he walked with God. Ah, but perhaps that tells a good deal, after all.

"He walked back and forth with God;" that is what the word really means. We read in the book

of Genesis how in the beginning God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, back and forth. It appears that Adam had once enjoyed the privilege of walking with Him, and then forfeited it; but here his descendant regained it. Enoch walked back and forth with God. That is the whole record of his life.

You have met a friend as you were going along the street, and greeted him, and fallen to talking with him; and you become so much interested in the talk that when your paths would have diverged, you say you will go with him a little farther; and the interest increases, and after a while he turns and walks part way back with you; and until you have your conversation through you cannot either of you bear to leave the other, but you walk back and forth together. According to this old story, three hundred years was not time enough for Enoch to finish his talk with God, and they walked back and forth together through all of it.

No doubt he did many other things meanwhile. He had one son, whose name we know; and we are told that he had other sons and daughters. That is, he was a man of family; and the stock turned out fairly well; Noah was his great-grandson; so the Saviour of the world came in the same line of descent. We have not a doubt that this remote ancestor of ours was a good citizen and householder,

and tilled his fields industriously, if he was a farmer, or cared for his flocks patiently, if he was a shepherd; in any case, taught his children diligently such truths as he knew. There is a tradition among the Arabs which says that he was a perfect repository of antediluvian learning, the father of astronomy, and I know not how many sciences; but the sacred history of these long ages between Adam and Noah is very economical of space, and the only mention it can afford of this one life is that the man spent it walking back and forth with God.

And yet what a complete biography that is! A man is known by the company he keeps, and by that token we know this man Enoch. Certainly he would need no further letter of introduction or commendation to any assembly of good people to-day. If we know that he has been walking back and forth with God, and God with him, for three hundred years or so, any of us would answer for the man.

I like to take this phrase as specially describing such piety as there was in the world through those ages before the flood, as the example of piety which those ages have to offer for our imitation. "Walked with God," the phrase is used of Enoch twice over, and then once of his righteous descendant Noah, and nowhere else, I think, in the Scripture. It seems to be reserved for these long-lived

children, in that strange babyhood of our race, to have this testimony given of them, that they walked with God.

Well, what was the end of it—of that long life of divine companionship? One day Enoch was not. His neighbors and his children missed him. And how should they account for his absence? Why, there could be no doubt where he had gone, or at least with whom he had gone. He and his God were always walking together; and they are together yet; if they are not here, then God has taken him. So that was what they said, "God has taken him."

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews quotes and interprets this story of the old patriarch, taking the story not as we read it in Genesis, translated from the Hebrew, but in the form which it bears in the Greek of the Septuagint version. This other form furnishes a very profitable interpretation of the story. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But 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."[1]

The man was saved by faith, then, just as hearers

[1] Hebrews xi, 5, 6.

of the Gospel must be saved now; and the New Testament version of the story goes on to show certain very simple articles of faith that Enoch must have held; that "God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." As a man who came to God, and stayed with God, Enoch must have believed as much as that. "God is, and He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; therefore I will seek Him," the man says, "and finding Him, I will stay by Him and walk with Him. It is worth more to me; I am better rewarded to be walking with Him, than to be going anywhere else, or doing or getting anything else. So, whatever happens, I will not leave His side. If I had errands that would take me away from Him, I will let them go. If I was travelling to such a city, and when we come to the fork in the road He will not go with me, I will change my purpose, and go the way that He will go, too." This was a matter of faith, you observe; and faith is "the evidence of things unseen." The Scripture does not say that Enoch saw God walking beside Him. God did not walk the earth any more in those days than He does in these. He did walk the earth in those days, as he does in these. And Enoch had faith enough to believe that, and to believe that walking with God was the best occupation for him; and so he kept it up, the story says, three hundred years.

It is hard to restrain our imagination as to what those companions talked about all those years. Who has not admired the insatiable curiosity of a bright child? There is no end to his questions. And the world was in its childhood then; everything was new and surprising. And if Enoch asked many questions of God about its wonders: what lifted the sun in the east, and dropped it so gently in the west; what gave the moon its eccentric orbit and ever-changing form; why the planets should wander so recklessly among the other stars —the Arab tradition may not be far wrong in calling him the first of astronomers; the subject seems not unworthy of the conversation of God and man. But when the sun became too dazzling for further contemplation, and Enoch reluctantly lowered his gaze, the green earth fresh with morning dew, and old ocean's gray and melancholy waste, might well keep the stream of questions running. The beasts of the earth and the fish of the sea, and the tree and the herb, bearing each its seed in itself, would fill the hours of many days with delightful curiosity. What a high privilege to walk through this abode of wonders with Him who is Builder and Maker of them all!

But the history says that Enoch lived in a world of riotous wickedness, quickly ripening for destruction, cursed already with hatred, and murder, and

want, and irksome toil. In such a world, could any human creature talk with God without beseeching Him to explain this sore mystery? We do not know how that grown-up child shaped his questions, or in what shape he got his answers; but something must have been told him of God's mercy and forgiveness; else how could he walk fearlessly where Adam, his own ancestor, hid himself in dread? There had been reconciliation, atonement of some sort, between that child of a guilty race and the Holy Creator, else they could not have so delighted in each other's company. And where sins have been confessed and forgiven, or any painful alienation has been removed, we know well what tone of conversation two friends are likely to fall into. So I do not wonder that Enoch could find subject-matter enough to fill even those long centuries with delightful communications.

And "he pleased God," the New Testament says. God also took pleasure in talking to such a listener and questioner; and so they walked back and forth together. When Enoch went out to his work in the morning, God went with him; and when he came back at even, God came with him. And I fancy, if anyone had asked Enoch, toward the close of his life, how old he was, he would have answered: "I hardly know. There was a time when this earthly journey seemed tedious and painful to me, and I

used to think that each day of toil would never end; but at last a new Presence came into my life; and since He has walked beside me, I have lost account of days, and the years pass before I had thought them well begun; and my only impatience is at those hours when I seem to lose this freedom of intercourse with Him, when I cannot get answer to my questions, when I cannot hear His voice or feel His touch upon me. I grow impatient then for His return, impatient to be with Him continually. And He seems to promise me that I shall be some day with Him continually." And so, when the day came that Enoch could not be found, men nodded their heads, and said, "He has got what he wanted; God has taken him."

Is not that a pleasant picture of faith to meditate upon? Is not that briefest of biographies one of the most satisfactory that was ever written? If your own name was destined to be mentioned in history four or five thousand years hence, can you think of any testimony you would rather have written after it than this, "He and God walked together continually"?

"But that could hardly be now," you say. "Well enough to look for that in the innocent childhood of the race, but not in this hard and faithless maturity. The world has grown old, since then, in wickedness and godlessness. The heavens and the

earth, are not so close together. The sun and moon and stars are not so fresh from the Creator's hand. His Divine touch has worn off them, and they have grown mechanical and materialistic in their motions. Astronomy, or any other science in these days, is quite as apt to be an atheism as a religion. The best that we can do now is to offer a distant and reverent worship to a far-off God, and to study these ancient records of His past revelations. We cannot think of walking with Him, or talking with Him, as men did once, in those days of innocence and childlike faith when Enoch lived."

"Innocence and childlike faith," friend—what are you saying? Those were the days when God saw that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Why, the one greatest wonder of Enoch's piety was that he seems to have been the only pious man living. Perhaps we may hope that it was not quite so bad as that, that his faith had a few unrecorded imitators; but however that may be, the age was one of notorious and almost universal wickedness; and so the holy conversation of this one man stands out as a single sublime exception to the apostasy of mankind.

Indeed, if you think of other saints of early time who are distinguished in Scripture for their in-

timate and personal communion with God, how many of them rose out of some age of special depravity and spiritual darkness. Moses, who talked with God face to face, at the time when that conversation began, had he many human companions in it? Samuel, the founder of the order of prophets; the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision, when that child began to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Elijah, in the days of wicked Ahab. Daniel, and afterward Nehemiah, among the dissolute courtiers of a heathen king at Babylon, like Joseph before them, the only worshipper of the true God, I suppose, in all Egypt. It almost seems that one thing that drove such men to God for company was that they could not find reputable company anywhere else. For three hundred years, perhaps, Enoch never found one holy being to walk with except God.

Let no one say, then, that such Divine fellowship is impossible in these later days, or in this distant Western land, because the world has grown so old and worldly and faithless. If that were true—which I do not believe—I believe rather that in any Christian town to-day God finds more persons with whom He is pleased to walk and talk than He could find in all the world, perhaps we may say, when Enoch walked upon it. For once

in these later days God Himself stepped across the broad gulf separating Him from our sinful race. In the person of His Son He came and walked visibly among us, inviting and winning our confidence, Himself setting the example of reconciliation. And this old earth cannot lose those blessed footprints, or the memory of that Divine Presence. The little company of those who walked with Jesus has grown into a great multitude which no man can number. It is not true that our earth has been growing faithless and godless since Enoch's day.

But if it were true, so far as it ever is true for any of us that our immediate surroundings in our own little world are those of worldliness and unbelief, or selfish money-making, or godless pleasure-seeking, that cannot keep away from God anyone who holds Enoch's creed, "that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." It is our privilege to have His company, if we will go His way, if we will not go any way where He refuses to go with us.

We can have that company if we want it, if we want it most of all. And I believe, too, that after a while we may know that we have it; that our Divine Companion will let us know from time to time that He walks beside us, that He is listening to us, that He is teaching us, that He is

pleased to have us walk beside Him. And how short the most tedious day would seem if we found ourselves in such company! And how easily we could reconcile ourselves to the vexatious privations and hardships of the journey if they did not trouble Him. Walking with God; walking back and forth with God; when we went out to our work in the morning, God going with us; and when we came back at even, God coming with us; that might be a daily occupation for you and me.

"And he was not, for God took him." Will that hold true, too? You have known it true of some of God's saints. We never hear of the sudden departure of some peculiarly faithful Christian that these words do not occur to us. A moment ago, yesterday, last week, here they were beside us, bringing heaven nearer by their devout and heavenly spirit; they were worshipping with us, lifting up our feeble petitions on the wings of their stronger faith; and now they are not, because—whatever the logic of reason may say, the logic of the heart gives this as the unquestionable conclusion—"they are not, because God has taken them."

But we must not restrict the comfort of this saying to such cases of sudden departure or immediate translation. Often God takes His servants down into the dividing valley by a more gradual

descent. For some time past the man has not been found in his accustomed place of usefulness, yet God has not taken him, but for many days, or years, we watch his sufferings and the slow dissolution of his mortal frame. But how often we find those very sick-beds and chambers of weariness the Lord's chosen abiding-places. The patient sufferer testifies that he had hardly known how much it meant to walk with God till he had lost the power to walk at all. As the earthly tabernacle dissolves, we seem to see a little of what God has been building up behind it. The man was cast into this furnace of affliction bound and alone; but shading our eyes, we can see his soul loosed, and that Divine Companion walking with him in the fire like the Son of God. And when at last the time comes to say of him, "He is not," for him, too, we add with all confidence, "for God has taken him."

"Walking with God." But do we? It is a searching question for preacher and hearer. We often come up to God's house seeking Him, and He is to be found always in the place where two or three are gathered in His name. Every worshipper sometimes seems to feel the Divine Presence there. Shall we have the same company as we walk home again, and for the rest of the day, and the days following? Shall we have this testi-

mony from those who know us best, and from Him who knows us altogether, that we please God, and spend our lives walking with Him, back and forth, day by day? That is the high privilege to which God has summoned His elect.

CHAPTER X

IT IS I MYSELF

We have been studying God's choice of men, a choice to service and to privilege. The privilege, as it is set forth in Scripture, is fellowship with Himself for time and for eternity. Our last chapter gave a representation of this privilege taken from the Old Testament. Our study shall now conclude in this chapter with a representation of the same privilege taken from the New Testament.

It is the interview of our Lord with His disciples after He was risen from the dead, as it is described in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke, the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses.

The disciples were troubled, terrified. They supposed that they had seen a spirit, or, as we should say, a ghost. Huddled together in that closed upper room, a sad and lonely company, mourning for the dear Lord who had been put to death, all their hopes dying with Him, suddenly they saw in the midst of them an appearance like His form, and heard a sound like His voice; but they thought it was only a ghost, a shadow, a vanishing hallucination, and they cried out in fear. But He an-

swered quickly, "Behold, see, that it is I Myself." They must know that death had made no break in that continuing personal identity of their dear Lord. He would show it to them as a visible, audible, tangible fact. "It is I Myself." Oh, if those disciples could be brought to believe it, if they could be well assured that it was true, it would be the best thing that had ever come to human knowledge since first men began to live and die.

Continuing identity of any sort is interesting to us. You go up to Central Park and look at that shaft of polished stone lifting its head toward the sky, its sides carved with strange hieroglyphics, and you say to yourself, "To think that Moses, when he was a lad at college in Egypt, passed that same piece of stone every day on his way to the lecture-room, and often read those same mysterious characters!" To think that, if the ancient law-giver could come back to life, and you should take him up to the Park and show him the obelisk, his eyes would brighten with a look of recognition, and he would say, "That is the very pillar that stood before the old Temple in On—the very same stone."

We are all affected by this identity, but still more if it is the identity of a living thing; a tree, for example, that you planted when you were a boy, or that your father planted before you were

born—the same tree, the same life, lasting on from then till now. The heart almost stops beating when they tell us that some one of the immense trees in the western part of our land had begun to lift its head into the air long before Christ was born at Bethlehem. That living identity is most of all significant to us; and yet, so far as material particles are concerned, the identity of a living thing is not so perfect as of a dead thing. A piece of stone stays, so far as we know, the very same atoms undisturbed until it should crumble into dust; but a tree is always changing, incorporating new particles into itself from air and soil, and throwing off others; it is like the flowing current of a river; yet everyone feels that the continuing identity of the life of that tree gets hold of our feeling more than the identity of any dead thing like a bit of metal or stone.

Still more clearly does the identity affect us if the living creature were a conscious animal; most of all if it were a living man. In man is where identity begins to count the most. Moving among a crowd of strangers, you come upon some person whose face stirs old recollections; and after a question or two, you catch him by both hands, exclaiming, "Is it possible that you are my old friend,—so dear to each other when we were schoolboys together, and separated all these years; are

you the same man, the same boy?" This personal identity is what really counts with us; and the reason why those other forms of sameness moved us—in old pillars and buildings and trees, and the like—is because they all pointed toward this continuing personal identity of living men and women, and their continuing personal relation to each other. That you yourself should continue to be through all changes my friend, the same man; that I should be able to say to you, after the lapse of half a century, "Behold, and see that it is I myself," the same man.

And yet, after all, what is it that stays the same? In a living man, I mean, where shall you locate the identity? You could answer me for the obelisk, whose stony atoms have clung together undisturbed through forty centuries of changeless existence; but can you answer for yourself? The particles of your own body, you change them over and over with the passage of the seasons, like the clothes on your back. Nothing in this world is more inevitably changeable than the body of a living man. Seven years, is it, that the doctors set as the utmost limit within which our whole corporeal structure must be absolutely transformed? All changed in seven years? And yet you come back after seventy years, and say to your old friend, "Look at me; it is I myself."

This is really one of the most impressive facts of human consciousness; this sense of continued personal identity in ourselves and each other, in spite of all the swift changes in the structure of the bodies we inhabit.

In spite of all changes, too, in mind and character; for how great those changes are! How many new things our minds have learned in these last dozen years, and how many old things they have forgotten; how many new conclusions we have adopted, how many outgrown opinions we have laid aside. You pull out a book from your shelves that you read when you were many years younger, and glance over the annotations still legible in your handwriting on the margin, and many of them make you stare. Did you write those things? It is the same old book, but you bring to it now so different a mind—not a different man, however; you, the living man, are the same; there is no one fact in the entire universe that you know quite so confidently as that.

In spite of all these mental and bodily changes in you, it is you yourself, and in spite of all changes in character, I once heard Dr. Schauffler say, speaking of the training of little children, that every little child—the little lambs, as we call them—has in him the potentialities of a sheep or a wolf; there is that in him which might develop

either way; and yet to the end of the blessed development, or of the tragical development, he remains the same child, our child. That personal identity and the continuing personal relation to you cannot be disturbed. The ruined prodigal in the far country is the very same boy who used to sit at his father's table at home with bread enough and to spare. The traitor who betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss was the very same with the disciple who had often sat at the table by his side and dipped his sop in the same dish. No matter how far a man wanders into evil, he cannot lose his relation to the good that he sinned against in going there. It is when a man fully wakes up to that fact that he begins to suffer what we call remorse. "Son, remember," said Abraham to the rich man in torment.

On the other hand, if a man shall be changed from evil to good, neither does that disturb his personal identity. The change may be revolutionary; we do not hesitate to say that the man has been given a "new mind" and a "new heart," that he is a "new creature," that he is "born again." We use the strongest possible phrases for showing how different he is to-day from what he was yesterday, but all the while we know that he is the same man. The prodigal returned to his father's house is the same boy who a little while ago knew

what it meant to be dying of hunger in the far country. Peter, bravely confessing his Lord before the council, is the same disciple who a little while ago was denying his Lord in the High Priest's palace. To the end of his days Paul would say, "I was the man who stood by and held the clothes of those who stoned a good man for confessing the Lord Jesus. It is I myself; I who so sinned, and I who have received so great mercy, the same Paul."

I say, this is the one first fact of human consciousness—on which depend all the facts of moral accountability—that through all possible changes of body, or of mind, or of heart, a man as we know him continues to be the same man. However revolutionary the changes that have come into his life, each new day as he awakes to consciousness he must say once more, "It is I myself." So it will continue day after day and year after year, through childhood, youth, manhood, old age, for threescore years and ten or fourscore years, so long as the man lives upon the earth, the same man, he himself.

But how shall it be after he has ceased to live upon earth? Ah, that has been one of the great questions. When a man dies, as we call it, and this ever-changing body of his has entered upon that final change which shall resolve it once more

into mere dust of the ground, what has become of the man then? This continuing personality which had lasted on through all the earlier changes of condition, what becomes of it in that last change which we call death? It is a question that men had always been asking since they have had wits enough to ask at all, and guessing at an answer; but the first men to go far beyond a guess for an answer were those disciples in that closed room in Jerusalem, when their dear Lord, whom they had once known a living man, and whom they had seen dead, came back among them, and said, "It is I Myself." And He said this in a way to make them believe it; and He proved it in a way to make them sure of it. Their confident conviction on that point is the foundation on which stands the entire structure of this Christian religion throughout the whole world. "It is I Myself."

The last great change that we call death had had no more power than other great changes to disturb that continuing personal identity of Jesus Christ. As this history is true, that was true for Jesus of Nazareth. Even death could not interrupt His personal identity. He was the same after it that they had known Him before it—"the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

But how shall it be for others? What are we to expect for ourselves, for our friends,

as we look forward to this change that we call death?

Some people have tried to persuade themselves that they were ready to relinquish their own identity at death; that they do not need to hope for a continued personal life beyond the grave. Enough if they could expect to live on after they were dead in an enduring influence and in the grateful memories of posterity. So one of them has sung in very noble words:

> "Oh, may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence,
> Whose music is the gladness of the world."

Some have tried to persuade themselves that some such impersonal hope as that is all we need to cheer us through life and in the prospect of death.

You might think so possibly for yourself; but could you feel so for one whom you had greatly loved, loved with your whole soul, loved better than your own life, your dearest friend, your lover, your child? Are you ready to think that he himself should be snuffed out like the flame of a candle, living on only in your memory, and the memories of others who recall what he has done? Shall those disciples be satisfied with the knowledge that the world shall be better because this Jesus once lived in it, but Jesus Himself is no more forever?

For my part I do not believe any human soul could long remain satisfied either for himself or for his friend with the thought of such vicarious immortality.

There is a strange confession in one of the letters of Mr. Huxley. "It is a curious thing," he writes to his friend Morley, "that I find my dislike to the thought of extinction increasing as I get older and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror, that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I had sooner be in hell a good deal—at any rate, in one of the upper circles. . . . I wonder if you are plagued in this way."

And again, having heard of the death of General Gordon at Khartoom, a man whom he greatly admired, he writes: "Poor fellow! I wish I could believe that his own conviction (as he told me) is true. . . . I wonder if he has entered upon the larger sphere of action which he told me was reserved for him in case of such a trifling accident as death."[1]

What admirable sincerity this is! Evidently Mr. Huxley was not satisfied at all, either for himself or for so noble a fellow as his friend Gordon,

[1] Life and letters of Thomas H. Huxley, by his son, Leonard Huxley, vol. ii, pp. 67, 101, 102.

with a vicarious immortality; that they should simply join the choir invisible of those who live again in the good influence on others of what they themselves have said and done. No, no; his heart demanded that somehow and somewhere such a man as Gordon should himself live on beyond this accident of death, and that he, Huxley, should live on to know what was going on in the year 1900. That is what we all want—not a shadowy ghost, not a vanishing memory or influence, but the living person, who might come back to us, if we had senses clear enough to see and hear him, and say, "Behold, and see, it is I myself."

This demand for a life beyond is one of the strongest and most universal of human instincts; and for once, according to this ancient record, that instinctive desire was satisfied for a little company of men and women in a closed room in Jerusalem, when the Lord whom they had loved and lost stood again among them, and said, "Behold, see, it is I Myself."

That is the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; that is the faith that we confess when we repeat our creed, and say, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Yes, "the body." What that "spiritual body," as Paul calls it, shall be like, I do not know; or how related to this perishable form which now serves my uses for a

little while. The Bible assures me that, whatever it is, it must be very different from the body now known to me, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Something better than this "muddy vesture of decay" will be needed for those heavenly mansions. The great parable of the vegetable world teaches us that "that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."

The article in the Creed means to us what it meant to the disciples, when their risen Lord said, "Behold, see, that it is I Myself." He was no vanishing ghost. He stood before them as a visible, audible, tangible fact, the most certain of all facts; it was His own continued personal identity; that He, the very same Lord whom they had loved and trusted, was still altogether alive; and that He was still to them all that He ever had been to them—He Himself. Let them behold, and see, and hear, and touch, and completely assure themselves of the truth of it.

And that is what we reaffirm in our Creed; that is the kind of immortality that Christian believers believe in. It is a choir invisible; these immortal dead do "live again in minds made better by their presence; their music is the gladness of the world."

All that George Eliot sang of them is true. But more than all that is true: for not only their influence lives on, but they themselves live on. So noble a piece of work as man, just as it was nearing perfection, has not been annihilated by the accident of death. Gordon was right, as Huxley wished he might be, and his death only meant for him a larger government to administer. The man lives on, he himself. That was the truth which those disciples began to believe and profess with triumphant confidence, after they had seen their dearest friend, Jesus Himself, risen from the dead.

That is what we still believe concerning all our friends who sleep in Jesus. We believe that the accident of death has not interrupted their personal identity, and that it cannot disturb their continued personal relations to each other and to us.

"Oh, then what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore;
What knitting severed friendships up,
Where partings are no more!
Then eyes with joy shall sparkle,
That brimmed with tears of late;
Orphans no longer fatherless,
Nor widows desolate."

That is the Christian faith, the confidence which we have learned from the disciples when they saw their dearest Friend risen from the grave, and heard Him say, "It is I Myself."

But more than this: for Jesus was not only their dearest human Friend; He was their Divine Lord and Saviour. Through Him they had been learning to know and love the infinite God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," was His own word to them. Their entire religious faith was now bound up in the confidence that they had learned to feel toward Jesus. For a little while, so long as Jesus walked by their side, the thought of God had been growing personal. Because Jesus was near, God was near; because Jesus was dear, God was dear; they began to feel that they could really love God. I say their entire religion had been growing thus personal, and the unseen God Himself was as their personal friend—all through their trust and affection for Jesus; for, when death took Jesus from them, where was their God? The personal bond which had been binding the finite to the Infinite was broken, and these poor orphans were left without God and without hope in the world.

No, but that bond had not been broken; for here stands Jesus again, as much as ever their friend, and more than ever their Lord; and he says, "It is I Myself." Henceforth the august name which is to be above every name, the name to be associated forevermore with all the most solemn acts of worship, the name at which every knee shall bow, and

which every tongue shall confess, will be none other than the name of this well-known Friend of theirs, Jesus Christ Himself, who had picked them out one by one and called them by name into His friendship. Death had in no way parted Him from them, but had only shown them more clearly who He is.

And as it was for them, so it remains for us. For the Christian believer God remains forever unchangeably personal, and bound to us by personal ties that cannot be sundered, because we still know Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. That remains the blessed and saving name.

> "Through him the first fond prayers are said
> Our lips of childhood frame;
> The last low whispers of our dead
> Are burdened with his name."

Knowing God through this gracious introduction, we know Him as our Father, Saviour, Friend. Whatever accidents might happen, whatever changes might befall in life or in death, you know that after they are over you two can meet, your God and you, each of you saying pleasantly to the other, "It is I myself." The one surest and most unchangeable fact of your existence is that personal relation to this personal God, who has called you into fellowship with Himself through Jesus Christ your Lord.

And so, from this time on, the whole dread mystery of the future was interpreted for those disciples by their personal relation to Jesus. "To be absent from the body was to be present with Him." Where shall heaven be? It is wherever He is. When shall heaven begin? Whenever He comes to take them to Himself. As old Rowland Hill used to sing quaintly,

> "For this I do find,
> We two are so joined,
> He'll not be in heaven
> And leave me behind."

Young Jonathan Edwards had the same thought about that young lady in New Haven, whose reported graces so stirred his soul, "that she expects after a while to be received up where He is, to be raised up out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that He loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from Him always."

That is the nature of this Christian confidence of immortality. The future is still an unsearchable mystery. The veil has not been lifted. "Eye hath not seen." "We know not what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is." The hope is personal, as to its ground and as to its end. It is not of some sort of shadowy existence, where all these definite relations of the present shall have

been obliterated; but a Christian's hope of immortality is all bound up with this most intensely personal experience of his soul, his own personal confidence in the Jesus whose voice first called him into this divine service and friendship.

But if we are to have that friendly confidence to cheer us in the hour of sorrow and death, we must be gaining it now. The hope comes from Him who calls, and it comes to those who, hearing the call, answer it with humble gratitude and loyalty. A day is coming when we and the Lord who called us so graciously are to stand face to face, and He shall say to us, "It is I Myself," and each of us must answer—but I think it might be the saddest answer: I pray God it may be for each of us the gladdest answer human lips could frame, when each of us should look up into His face, and say, "It is I myself."

So this brings us to the end of our study of God's choice of men. From first to last we have found this Divine choice exalting the idea of individual human personality. The new life started in the soul when He called His own by name; and the immortal life grows sure through their personal relation to Him. Individual personality is the uniform outcome of this great doctrine of Divine election. God chooses men one by one.

Human life, therefore, is not, and must never become, a dead level of monotonous mediocrity. So far as the tendencies of our modern times are for making it so, planing off all individual excellence and distinction, and sinking the individual in the mass, just so far these tendencies are disastrous and deplorable and anti-Christian. The rule of the crowd is the new tyranny which now everywhere threatens the free development of the individual soul in this overcrowded world.

To guard us against this tyranny of the crowd, or to emancipate us from it, we need the same power which worked so mightily in the days of our fathers, and through their heroic faith in a God who chooses His own one by one.

It may be true that the old Calvinism, as such, is going out of fashion. So far as any of its expressions tended toward a paralyzing fatalism, or toward the "horrible decree"[1] of reprobation, it ought to go out of fashion. Calvinism in its human negations and limitations; Calvinism, when the theologian had turned his back on the sun and was confounded or fascinated by the horror of his own shadow—for that is this human doctrine of reprobation; Calvinism as it spoke through that eighteenth century Eli, the moderator of presbytery who issued his decree to William Carey, "Young

[1] "Decretum quidem horribile fateor," Calvin, Inst. III, xxiii, 7.

man, when God wants the heathen converted, He will convert them without help from you or me," it is high time that all such Calvinism should go out of fashion.

But Calvinism in its splendid affirmations; Calvinism turning its gaze away from the shadows and toward the insufferable glory; Calvinism trusting in, and responding to, the God who calls us men by name and exalts us to the high responsibility of freely serving Him—that which is the true Calvinism of all ages, must never go out of fashion, for the world can never spare it. Again and again it has saved the liberties of our race, and we still need its saving and emancipating power.

Ah, yes, they remain always the hope of the world, these elect men and women who have heard that Divine call and have given their lives to obeying it. They can dignify the lowliest station, if God so will, by their sense of God's appointment in that humility; but they can also mount calmly to the loftiest station, if God so will, because they are only answering His summons to come up higher. It is their sensitiveness to God which makes them patient to suffer or brave to fight; which draws them habitually into the second mile of willing service, exalts them habitually to the gracious hospitalities of the upper room, and makes it their own

chosen purpose in life to apprehend that for which they were apprehended of Christ Jesus.

They are still the hope of the world. Threatened by this new tyranny and demoralization of the crowd, human society must look for deliverance to these elect individuals who have heard and answered the call of God.