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THE SHORT COURSE SERIES

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THE title of the present series is a sufficient indication of its purpose. Few preachers, or congregations, will face the long courses of expository lectures which characterised the preaching of the past, but there is a growing conviction on the part of some that an occasional short course, of six or eight connected studies on one definite theme, is a necessity of their mental and ministerial life. It is at this point the projected series would strike in. It would suggest to those who are mapping out a scheme of work for the future a variety of subjects which might possibly be utilised in this way.

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General Preface

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The Short Course Series

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IN THE UPPER ROOM

**A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION OF
JOHN XIII.-XVII.
(WITH RELATED PASSAGES)**

BY

**DAVID JAMES BURRELL
D.D., LL.D.**

AUTHOR OF
“THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE” “THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD”
“THE SERMON: ITS CONSTRUCTION AND DELIVERY” ETC.

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"As we read the records of the great and good, we cannot help sometimes wishing it had been our lot to follow Plato in his garden, or to hear the table-talk of Luther, or to sit with Bunyan in the sunshine of the streets of Bedford, or to listen to Coleridge bodying forth the golden clouds of his philosophy. But what would any such privilege have been in comparison with that of Mary who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words; or that of John, who leant on His bosom and listened to the beating of His heart."

Imago Christi.

I.

THE GUEST-CHAMBER.

(Mark xiv. 12-16.)

AT length the hour for which the whole creation had been groaning and travailing had arrived. The hands on God's dial were pointing to the fulness of time. And Jesus said, "The hour is come."

The hour had come to fulfil Messianic prophecy by filling full the long-cherished "hope of Israel" and revealing the mystery of salvation which, having been "hid from the beginning," was now to be made known in the manifold wisdom of God. The hour had come to make an end of the old economy—which was but "a shadow of good things to come"—and usher in the gospel, in which the entire "handwriting of ordinances" was

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to be blotted out. The hour had come for the Master to keep His last Passover with His disciples. It was now Thursday, known as the Paraskeue or "day of preparation," and the feast was set for to-morrow evening ; but it must be kept by anticipation, if at all, because to-morrow Jesus would not be here. The Lamb of God was about to be offered as a sacrifice for the world's sin. The hour had come to assemble "the remnant of Israel" for reorganisation in the larger form of the Christian Church ; and in this assemblage great forces were to be set in motion, which should ultimately, despite all opposition, bring in the Golden Age.

All this and more was in the mind of Jesus when He said to Peter and John, "Go into the city ; and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him ; and wheresoever he shall enter in, say to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples ? And he will himself show you a large upper

The Guest-Chamber

room furnished and ready. There make ready for it."

i. THE OUTRIDERS OF THE KING

The four men here mentioned were appointed as outriders or pursuivants of the King to prepare the way before Him. The campaign of the centuries was about to be inaugurated, and the Master began with these men. They were the vanguard of a great multitude whom no man can number, commissioned to go forth to the conquest of the world. In the logic of events they must be multiplied along the centuries until, at length, the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Two of these outriders are Peter and John ; who, being representatives of the apostolate, properly lead the way. As life-long friends they go arm in arm. Thus it is written, "Two are better than one ; for if one fall the other will lift him up."

In their boyhood they had played together by the shore of the Galilean sea. As fisher-

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men they had helped each other to let down their nets and to carry their catch to the fish-market in Capernaum. They were as different as different could be. John was like light and Peter was like heat ; but light and heat were here united in a single flame.

The strongest bond of their fellowship was their mutual devotion to Christ. He had met them at the seashore when they were mending their nets and had said, “Follow me.” This was their call not merely to the Christian life, but to the apostolic office. They were summoned from all secular pursuits into the exclusive service of Christ ; wherefore, they arose and left their boats and nets to follow Him. They were no longer fishermen, but “fishers of men.”

In this they stand as representatives of the ministry through all succeeding ages ; that is, of such as have turned their backs on common pursuits to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Who shall number them now ? They are sounding the Lord’s trumpet in the pulpits of the world. They are

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traversing plains and climbing mountains, crossing seas and fording rivers to carry the gospel of light and life to those who dwell in regions of darkness and the shadow of death.

“How beanteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion’s hill;
Who bring salvation on their tongues
And words of peace reveal.
The watchmen join their voice,
And tuneful notes employ;
Jerusalem breaks forth in songs,
And deserts learn the joy.”

The third of the outriders is “the good-man of the house,” and he has his place as really as the apostles in the mighty plan.

It would appear that he was a man of wealth and social position. His home was of such dimensions as to afford a large guest-chamber; furthermore, he had servants in his employ.

He was obviously a believer in Christ. His name is not recorded, possibly for prudential reasons. He was undoubtedly one of many who at that time accepted Christ without openly confessing Him. This

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is evidenced by the fact that his house was so readily placed at the Master's command. Consecration is the touchstone of discipleship. Blessed is the man who holds all his possessions for Christ. Discipleship is stewardship. Our time and treasure are held in trust. It is enough for a true Christian when the word comes, "The Master hath need." Happy is he whose home has ever a room which Christ may call "my guest-chamber." Nay rather, happy is he in whose heart and home alike there is no smallest room which is not wholly Christ's. The home becomes a vestibule of heaven when the Saviour stands in its doorway saying, "Peace be within this house."

So this goodman stands for that splendid company of influential laymen who hold themselves and their possessions subject to the order of Christ. Whatever may be said of the shrivelling power of wealth, we know there are many such "goodmen" who lend themselves to the blessed work. The great enterprises of the Church to-day are largely indebted to such as count their wealth by

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millions. Because they reckon their talents in terms of stewardship they shall not fail of the Master's commendation, "Well done, good servant."

The fourth of the outriders is the man with the pitcher of water. What of him? He was a mere nobody. Yet he also was included in the mighty plan. God has a place for the nameless ones.

He was engaged in a menial task ; indeed, he was doing a woman's work, bearing a pitcher from the well. But what matter, if he was carrying that pitcher in the line of duty ?

"A servant with that clause
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room as to God's laws
Makes that and the action fine."

It would probably have surprised this inconspicuous man, a mere plebeian, had he been informed that he was exerting an influence for good. He little dreamed, when he heard footsteps behind him, that not only Peter and John, but the whole

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Christian Church was really following in his steps. How far his little candle throws its beams !

This man with the pitcher stands for the countless rank and file of humble believers who are rarely in the limelight. Their names are not heard in public places. They serve in remote corners and within narrow limitations. There are no trumpet blasts or waving plumes in the campaign of their lives. They modestly use their single talent for the glory of their Lord, and hope for nothing beyond His praise ; “They have done what they could.” Of such is the strength of the Christian Church to-day. Not fame but faithfulness is what the Master requires of us.

“Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle burning in the night:
In the world is darkness; so we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine.”

The outstanding fact is this : *the true measure of life is always found in our relation to Christ.* The only claim to immortality

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on the part of the two apostles, the goodman of the house, and the man with the pitcher, is based upon the fact that they were all, consciously or unconsciously, serving Him. His service overshadows all. It is only as we find and fill our appointed places in His mighty plan that we win success in this present life and qualify ourselves by faithful apprenticeship for the higher tasks of Heaven awaiting us.

I see these men climbing the outer stairway to the upper room. The door closes ; great things will presently be doing there. The Church will gather about a table, with the Master in the midst, and partake of a feast of fat things and wine upon the lees. He will confer with them in the secret place of His pavilion, and His banner over them will be love.

2. THE TRANSFORMING OF THE FEAST (Luke xxii. 14-18).

The scene in the upper room comes vividly before us. The Lord, whose relation to the Twelve was like that of a

In the Upper Room

father in his household, arose at the head of the table and, according to custom, recounted the incidents of the memorable night when Israel was delivered out of bondage. Would that we might have heard the tragic story as it fell from His lips : the gathering of the households, the sprinkling of the blood, the awaiting of the signal with loins girt and staves in hand, the cry at midnight from homes bereaved, a deep crescendo of mothers' woe—and then the going forth.

The story was probably followed by the singing of one of the Hallel psalms. For the Passover was not only a memorial ; it was also a Eucharist or thanksgiving feast. Could the Jews ever forget how the angel of destruction had "passed over" their homes on that eventful night ? Let them lift the song therefore : "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! "

But the Passover was more than a Eucharist ; it was also a Sacrament. The word is

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derived from *sacramentum*, meaning an oath of allegiance, such as was taken by Roman soldiers on the eve of battle. The Jews were expected at this feast to renew their covenant with God. The terms of that covenant are recorded in connection with the first celebration of the Passover at Sinai : “If ye will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me.” And the people answered with one accord, “All that the Lord hath spoken will we do” (Ex. xix. 1-8 ; see also Ex. xxiv. 7, 8, and xxxiv. 1-28). This covenant was renewed in the upper room. The disciples were thus reminded of the obligations which rested upon them as believers in the true God.

But the Passover was more than a Memorial, a Eucharist and a Sacrament ; it was a Communion. At this feast the tribal banners were laid aside, and all united in celebrating their oneness as the Chosen People, knit together by a common faith and a common hope.

This was destined to be the last Passover

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that would be lawfully kept in Israel or ever in this world of ours. A new feast was now to supplant it. The Passover must go ; because the whole ceremonial system was about to be nailed to the Cross and taken out of the way. It had but one purpose, namely, to keep alive the Messianic hope. Its mission was now accomplished ; and it was to disappear as shadows vanish at the rising of the sun.

It is written accordingly that “after the supper” Jesus took bread and, when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave to His disciples saying, “This is my body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me.” And He took the cup in like manner saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you ” (Luke xxii. 19, 20).

In the Lord’s Supper thus instituted we have the Passover merged, transformed and reduced to its simplest terms. Observe the close correspondence.

The Lord’s Supper, like the Passover, was a Memorial. “Do this in remembrance

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of me." "For as oft as ye do this, ye do show the Lord's death until he come." Thus the Cross threw its shadow over the feast. The paschal lamb was a prophecy of "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world"; as Paul says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7).

It is also a Eucharist. At the Lord's table we rejoice in Him who by His atoning sacrifice has blotted out our sins. There is no Hallel like ours : "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his trouble. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! "

It is also a Sacrament ; in which we renew our covenant vows. "Ye are bought with a price," says Paul, "therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. vi. 20). The price of our ransom is designated by Peter where he says : "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 18).

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The Lord's Supper is also a Communion. "One family we dwell in him." We are akin with all those, of every name throughout the world, who receive Christ as their Saviour. In Him we are united not only with all the living members of the family of Christ, but with the innumerable company that have gone on before us.

"One family we dwell in Him :
One Church above, beneath ;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of Death."

In addition to all this, the Lord's Supper is profitable as a foreshadowing of the great marriage feast at which the nuptials of Christ and His Church are finally to be sealed. In that day the bride shall present herself "without spot or blemish or any such thing"; and a feast of fat things shall be spread before the guests. "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him!"

II.

THE ASSEMBLING OF THE CHURCH.

(Mark xiv. 17.)

IN the twilight of the evening the little company climbed the outer stairway into the upper room. Let us enter and look about us.

We have read of Councils of War and Councils of Peace, of political conclaves and conferences of the Great Powers ; but the world has never seen an assembly like this. How simply the record runs : “ In the evening he cometh with the twelve.” There is no blare of trumpets nor waving of banners. The Man of Nazareth enters with His modest retinue. Why are they here ? Is it merely to keep the Passover ? Is it only for the last farewell ? Oh, no ; it means vastly more. Our Lord has a great purpose in

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mind : no less than to marshal and mobilise His Church for the campaign of the ages.

It is safe to say that the disciples had no thought of the tremendous issues which were destined to go forth from that meeting. We are accustomed to regard it as a mere incident in the Gospel story : but behind the closed doors of that guest-chamber a work was begun which was destined ultimately to restore the ruined race to God.

The Church is the greatest organisation on earth. All other guilds, fraternities, leagues, federations, governments and political alliances combined, are not to be compared with it. This is the great living organism through which God is working, by the power of His Spirit, for the establishment of His kingdom of truth and righteousness in this world of ours.

It is significant that the Christian Church should have had its beginning here in the goodman's house. The domestic ideal is observed. The primal Church was in the house of Adam and Eve, having its franchise in the prophecy of "the seed of the woman"

The Assembling of the Church

who was to “bruise the serpent’s head.” Then came the Church in the house of Noah, who “builded an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt-offerings upon it”—an altar spanned by a rainbow arch of Messianic hope. Then the Church in the house of Abraham, who saw Christ afar off “and was glad.” Then the Church in the house of Moses, and the Church in the house of David, and thus along the ages. It was meet, therefore, that the reorganised Church should meet as a home circle with the shadow of the Cross over it. For the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love is a family tie. God is our Father ; and Christ, “the first-born among many brethren,” is elder Brother of us all. “For this cause,” says Paul, “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”

It may not be unprofitable in this connection to correct some of the prevalent mistakes with reference to the Church.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Church thus instituted by Christ was a *new Church*.

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The Church of ancient Israel was a Christian Church. It had no reason for existence except in its loyalty to the expected Christ. Adam was a Christian ; Abraham was a Christian ; Moses was a Christian ; David was a Christian ; all true Jews were Christians, because they cherished the Hope of Israel and were saved by faith in Christ, precisely as believers are saved in these days.

The Jews were "chosen" to transmit the Messianic hope to succeeding ages. In the course of time, however, the great multitude, while keeping up the outward forms of devotion, so far lost the true conception of their Messiah that when He came they were ready to put Him to an ignominious death. But there was always "a remnant" that continued to cherish the Hope. This remnant was represented by the little company of believers in the goodman's house. The purpose of Christ was now to reorganise and reanimate this remnant as the true Israel of God. He originated nothing on this occasion. The Christ who presided over this assembly was the Messiah of the Jews. No

The Assembling of the Church

new creed was formulated, no new code of ethics ; no new plan of salvation ; nothing new. It was a revival of Judaism pure and simple ; a renaissance of the Church as originally constituted, the Church of Messiah, the only-begotten Son of God.

It is also a mistake to regard this Christian Church as an *exclusive Church*.

The Jews had been “separated” as a peculiar people. Their Church was ethnic, or national, in the necessity of the case. They were entrusted with the Oracles, in which were crystallised the prophecies of Christ, and were enjoined to pass them on along the centuries until He should appear. But they construed this to mean that they had a monopoly of salvation. They became a close corporation, accordingly, closing the doors against all comers, and saying, “The temple of the Lord are we.”

In the goodman’s house the doors are thrown open. The arms of Christ are stretched out in invitation to all sinners desiring to know the way of eternal life. We shall presently see a polyglot assemblage

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at a Pentecostal feast, where the spokesman of the Church exhorts Parthians, Medes and Elamites and dwellers in Mesopotamia, Phrygians and Pamphylians, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins ; “for to you is the promise, and to your children and to all that are afar off ; even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.”

It is a further mistake to regard this Church as a *sacerdotal Church*.

In the worship of Israel “the service” was the great thing. At the very hour when the disciples were assembled in the upper room the rabbis were worshipping in the temple near by with great pomp and circumstance. They were clad in pontifical robes with broad fringes and phylacteries. They were burning incense and waving oblations and performing all manner of liturgical rites. But there was nothing of that sort in the goodman’s house. The purpose of the elaborate system of ordinances in the Jewish Church was to keep alive the Messianic

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hope. All the ablutions, all the sacrifices, centred in Christ. It is obvious that when He came there was no more occasion for them ; because He fulfilled them all. The scaffolding was taken down when the building was completed.

We are thus delivered from the bondage of the ceremonial law. All that remains of that complex system is the two sacraments : Baptism, which stands for all the ancient ablutions, and the Lord's Supper, which is a memorial summary of all sacrifices. In these the ceremonial law is reduced to its simplest terms. Thus it is written, "He blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us ; and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross " (Col. ii. 14).

It is a mistake, furthermore, to suppose that the Christian Church is a *uniform Church*.

The Jewish Church was an integer, an indivisible unit. It had but one temple, whither all the tribes went up. To this day the tribes scattered throughout the world worship with their faces toward Zion. The

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Jewish Church was like a solitaire ; but the Christian Church is like a cluster of diamonds for the King's crown. It has no temple. It worships in ten thousand temples, and in ten thousand ways, while holding to "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all."

This diversity in unity is after the analogy of nature. We are born to segregate. Men gather in groups, according to their divers ways of thinking. If you follow the apostles out of the upper room, you will find each of them gathering about him a group of like-minded men. We shall have the Petrine Church, placing its emphasis on zeal : the Johannean Church, placing its emphasis on love : the Jacobean Church, placing its emphasis on conduct. But however these "denominations" may multiply, they will all preserve their legitimacy by emphasising Christ and the essential facts which centre in Him. "In essentials unity, in non-essentials diversity, in all things charity." Thus the force of cohesion is stronger than all divisive forces. "We are not divided ; all one body

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we ; one in hope and doctrine, one in charity.” Christ ever walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks with their many branches, having on His right hand the signet ring with its seven stars. This is “Church union” as it ought to be.

It is another mistake to regard the Christian Church as a perfect Church—that is, as *a body of good people*.

In that assembly in the upper room there were none but sinners. We speak of “Saint John” and “Saint Peter” and “Saint James”; but they themselves would have disavowed it. The members of the Christian Church do not profess to be good, but only to be trying to be good. There is no difference; all alike are sinners saved by grace. All alike are trusting in the cleansing power of the blood. All alike are moved by a resolute purpose to overcome sin and follow in the footsteps of Christ who is their exemplar in righteousness.

Peter is always with us, stumbling and denying his Lord, but repenting and insisting, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.”

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Thomas is always with us, doubting and hesitating, but convinced at length by the wounds of the Master and crying, “My Lord and my God ! ” And now and then, alas ! a Judas is found among us, who “ steals the livery of the Court of Heaven to serve the devil in.” In fact, however, his intrusion in this company is a tribute to the general character of the Church and the popular estimate concerning it ; for rogues do not counterfeit bad money. We never hear of a spurious infidel. It is not worth while to counterfeit infidelity ; because there is nothing to be gained by it. But to pass for a Christian is a matter of some consequence ; and little wonder that occasionally a bad man takes advantage of it. The Lord Himself said, “The wheat and the tares must grow together until the judgment.” There will be a great sifting in that day ; and “the Lord knoweth them that are his.”

It is a mistake also to think of the Christian Church as a *provisional Church*—that is, an organisation which may sometime be supplanted by a better one.

The Assembling of the Church

There never has been but one Church and there never will be another. The Church as originally instituted, and as revived and re-energised by Christ in the goodman's house, was adjusted to all the vicissitudes of time. The world moves and new conditions require new modes and methods ; but, as to the fundamentals of the Church, they are like Christ Himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

There are some things that never change. Air and water and sunlight cannot be improved on. Sin is just what it has always been ; nor is there any new plan of salvation. God is abreast of every age. The non-essentials come and go, but the essentials have come to stay. Thrones and dynasties rise and flourish and totter to their fall ; but the Church abides.

"O where are kings and empires now
Of old that went and came?
But, Lord, Thy Church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same.
Unshaken as the eternal hills
Immovable she stands :
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
An house not made with hands."

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There is one point at which no thoughtful man can make any mistake ; namely, that the Christian Church is a *conquering Church*.

The men who are presently to issue from the goodman's house will be going to the conquest of the world. "I send you forth," said the Master, "as sheep among wolves." The axe is sharpened ; the fagots are kindled ; but the blood of the martyrs is destined to be the seed of the Church. In all these nineteen centuries there never has been a time when the hands on God's dial have moved backward. There have been seasons of discouragement when men, noting an apparent decadence of faith, have cried, "The fountains of the great deep are broken up !" But the Captain of our salvation leads no forlorn hope. The truth of His Messiahship and power to save is an impregnable rock ; as He said, "On this rock do I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

III.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOOT-WASHING.

(John xiii.)

A YEAR before this meeting in the upper room the disciples, on their way from the Mount of Transfiguration, had disputed as to which should be greatest in the kingdom that Christ was about to set up. He reproved them then by taking a little child upon His knees and saying, "If any man would be first, he shall be last and servant of all" (Matt. xviii. 1-4; cf. xx. 25-28, xxiii. 1-12).

As they now gathered in the upper room they revived the old dispute. It was unworthy of them. They should have known better. The trouble arose from a total mis-

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understanding as to the coming kingdom. Christ had made it as clear as possible that this was to be a kingdom of truth and righteousness ; but they expected Him to put on a crown and purple robe and “restore the glory to Israel.” In that case, what was more natural than that Peter, to whom the keys were entrusted, should be made Prime Minister ? Or that Judas, who had been placed in charge of the meagre funds, should be made Chancellor of the Exchequer ? Or that the others should expect promotion and discuss their relative priority in the distribution of offices ? All this was stupid and puerile ; but these disciples were only children of a larger growth. How were they to be made to understand that there was to be no such kingdom as they were thinking of ?

We should be slow to blame them ; for the fault is a generic one. We are all eager to forge to the front and make life tell. So much is “a man better than a sheep.” We are born equal, like sheep, but we part

Significance of Foot-Washing

company as soon as we begin to walk. Then competition begins. It is like an Olympiad, in which each one “stretches forth toward the mark for the prize.” A boy goes to school and straightway sets out for the head of his class. He enters college and begins to dream of the valedictory, or of graduating *summa cum laude*. He goes out into the world and girds himself to distance his competitors. Life is a campaign, in which every true soldier aspires, like the storied Spartan, to march in the van.

There is something admirable in this. Ambition has been called “the infirmity of noble minds”; but if properly directed and kept within suitable bounds it is no infirmity at all. To climb the ladder is the laudable ambition of every self-respecting toiler. It is only when men jostle each other aside in their eagerness to push to the front, or when they organise a “closed shop” to keep others out or drive them to the wall, that we begin to see the brutal side of it.

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i. THE FOOT-WASHING.

It is clear that this is the inner significance of the foot-washing. Our Lord did not intend to reprove the ambition of His disciples, but to direct and curb it. The story is told simply: "He riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself; then he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet."

One thing is evident: some lesson of unusual importance was in His mind, else He would not have said to His disciples, "Know ye what I have done unto you?"

To say that we are to follow His example literally in this case, as the Winebrennerians do, or as the Pope does on Maunday Thursday, is to misconstrue and belittle it. As well put a literal construction on His injunction, "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer the other also; and from him that taketh away thy cloak, withhold not thy coat also." It is a true saying, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." What

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the Master had in mind was not a petty rite or ceremony, but a great lesson, which was destined, when properly understood, to affect the entire lives and characters of those who followed Him.

His own thought was perfectly clear : He, “knowing that his hour was come, and knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and knowing that he came forth from God and that he was returning to God,” did thus and so. And He was desirous that His disciples also should understand it. Are we sure that we apprehend the mighty sweep of His purpose here ? Not one of His disciples would have performed the menial service to which He stooped that day. It was not for nothing that He thus demeaned Himself. What did He mean by it ?

The first thing we have here is a *Definition of true greatness* ; and it differs in no wise from what He had previously said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” ; and “Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.”

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But the humility of the Master is no humiliation. It is not servility, but service ; with a definite and blessed end in view. It is not “bending the pregnant hinges of the knee that thrift may follow fawning,” but rather stooping to conquer. John Milton characterises it as “that lofty lowliness of mind which is exalted by its own humiliation.” There is a false humility which is only another name for pride : like that of Diogenes, of whom Plato said that “he was prouder of the holes in his garments than many kings of their purple and fine linen.” On the other hand, there is a warrantable pride, based on truest character, which counts it the very summit of privilege to bow low that others may walk over it into a truer life.

We have also here a *Principle* laid down ; the same that the Romans referred to in the proverb, *Servire est regnare*.

To serve is indeed to reign. Is a mother ever greater than when she ministers to her children ? Is a king ever more sovereign than when he seeks the welfare of his

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humblest subjects? Where will you find a nobler legend than that on the escutcheon of the Prince of Wales? "I serve!"

And here is also a *Law* formulated; to wit, the Law of Service. All who truly follow Christ are under this law.

It is recorded that when Jesus had washed the disciples' feet He resumed His garments and sat down and talked with them. In the course of that conversation He said, "A new commandment give I unto you; even as I have loved you, that ye love one another." How could this be called a new commandment? Had He not frequently bidden His disciples to love one another? Had He not told them one of the two great commandments was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? Yes; but this is different, as we shall see further on. They are not to love one another as they loved themselves. The love of self is to be entirely obliterated; and they are to love one another as Christ had loved them; that is, with an entirely self-forgetful and self-denying love. That was indeed a new com-

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mandment ! The world had heard nothing like it.

This new commandment is illustrated by the washing of their feet. A man returning from the bath would gather dust upon his feet along the way : so that on reaching the next threshold he must lay aside his sandals and use the basin before entering. Thus it is necessary for those who have been purged from sin to cleanse themselves from the defilement of ever-recurring sins. And it is the duty of all who follow Christ to help one another in this matter ; not to blame or thrust with the fist, but to bend low and lend a hand. Was not this what Christ was ever doing ? And should we not expect Him to lay the same injunction upon us ? Paul puts it in another form : “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ” (Gal. vi. 2).

We have here, furthermore, an *Example*. And Jesus said, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet. For I have

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given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you."

Nor was there anything extraordinary in this particular case of humility on the part of our blessed Lord. Had He not said, "The Son of Man is come not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"? In his incarnation he bowed the Heavens to come down and take upon Himself the form of a servant. His life was all ministry; it was expended in the behalf of His fellow-men. It is written that He "went about doing good." What biography was ever written so briefly and wonderfully as that? And His death was the greatest ministry of all. On the Cross He stooped to conquer the world. In that supreme act of self-sacrifice He girded Himself to serve all men.

This I conceive to be the lesson of the foot-washing. "Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant; and,

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being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God hath also highly exalted him, and given unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

2. JUDAS THE BETRAYER (vers. 18-30).

In connection with the foot-washing,—which was an acted parable on true greatness,—our Lord addressed Himself to the cases of two self-willed disciples who were presently to illustrate the truth of His teaching, *per contra*, one by betraying Him and the other by denying Him.

The first is Judas. If, as many think, he was "the worst man in the Bible," it was not because he was an enemy of Christ. In that respect Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers and the Jews generally, were as guilty as he. It was his dark treachery and deliberate hypocrisy that made his name a perpetual

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hissing and byword. In the three lists of the apostles he is always mentioned with this stigma, "Judas, which also betrayed him."

And yet this man was once an innocent child in his mother's arms. He played with other boys in the streets of Kerioth, and his laughter was as innocent as theirs. He passed into his manhood under a rainbow arch of promise. Then Jesus came into his life, saying, "Follow me!" and Judas rose up and followed Him. For three years he sat with the other disciples at the feet of the great Teacher, whose words are always a "savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." His heart meanwhile was unchanged. He wore a mask, and wore it so successfully that his disloyalty was unsuspected by his most intimate friends until the last act in the awful tragedy, when he betrayed his Master with a kiss.

In the Orient there is a tree which puts forth a beautiful leaf, then a red hypnotic flower, and afterwards a gall-apple filled with

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poisonous dust. It is called the “Judas tree” : it appropriately symbolises the self-propagating power of evil ; its leaf, its blossom and its fatal fruit.

The genealogy of evil is set forth by the Apostle James, after the same manner, in three downward steps, as follows : “ Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”

The story begins with lust. The word has an uncanny sound. Its reference is to any inordinate desire. It may be the desire of pleasure. Or it may be ambition, that is, the unbridled lust of earthly glory. In the case of Judas it was avarice. This was the leaf of the Judas tree.

Now money, of itself, has no moral quality at all. It is good or bad, as the case may be. It will kindle a fire to warm the blue hands of poverty, or to burn up truth and virtue and all nobleness. It will make the wilderness of the world to blossom like the rose, or scorch the greenest meadows into barrenness.

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“Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold;
Molten, graven, hammered and rolled;
Heavy to get and light to hold;
Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold;
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled;
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould;
Price of many a crime untold.
Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold!
Good or bad a thousand fold;
How widely its agencies vary!
To save, to ruin, to curse, to bless;
As even its minted coins express,
Now stamped with the image of good Queen Bess
And now of bloody Mary.”

All depends on what is done with it. But without controversy “the *love* of money is a root of all kinds of evil, by which many have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. vi. 10).

Lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin. It is recorded of Judas that, as treasurer of the Twelve, he “bare the bag”; and we are led to surmise that he purloined from it. We know that he coveted the money which might have been realised from the sale of the precious nard

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with which the feet of Jesus were anointed. It was the lure of thirty pieces of silver that ultimately ruined him.

The taste of the sacramental wine was on his lips when he went out of the upper room and betook himself to the Hall of Caiaphas to betray his Lord. The rulers were eager to receive him. This was the opportunity they had long waited for.

“When,” they asked, “wilt thou deliver Him unto our hands?”

“This very night.”

“And where?

“He is now on His way to a garden on the slope of Olivet. I know the place well. He is accustomed to go there for meditation and prayer. I will lead you.”

They set forth, guards, rabbis and a mob with staves and lanterns. The traitor was in front. He led them at a quick pace down the path to the Kidron and up along the slope of the opposite hill. As they entered the garden, Judas turned and said, “Whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he; hold him fast.”

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As they passed under the deeper shadows of the olive trees they saw Christ yonder in the moonlight ; and Judas, rushing headlong to his ruin, approached and threw his arms around Him. “ Hail, Master,” he cried, and kissed Him. The word here used is that of a lover and a maid : he kissed Him eagerly, passionately, again and again. Thus did he consummate his crime. It was *lèse-majesté*, treachery of the deepest, darkest dye. That kiss in the garden was the red flower of the Judas tree.

Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. The body of the self-slain traitor swings above the deep abyss of Hinnom. We may not linger here. The winds are moaning, “ The wages of sin is death ! ” The tree has borne its gall-apple. Thus the betrayer of Jesus went unto “ his own place.” Where else could he go ?

And yet observe how Jesus tried to save Judas. He admonished him again and again, saying, “ One of you shall betray me.” He kindled many beacons to warn him away from the dizzy abyss. In giving him

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the sop which had been dipped in pottage—a token of singular friendship—He made a pathetic appeal to the lingering sense of manhood that was in him; as if to say, “Thou art mine own familiar friend; I pray thee, do it not!” The words, “What thou doest, do quickly,” were like the cry of one awaiting the surgeon’s knife: “Do not prolong the agony!” How could Judas hear and not respond? The answer is, his heart was fully set in him to do evil. He went out, “and it was night!”

Nor was it too late even then. For “while the lamp holds on to burn, the greatest sinner may return.” Was not the penitent thief caught up into heaven when his feet were staggering on the very crust of hell? The saints triumphant are all sinners saved by grace, and among them are many once drabs and drunkards, plucked out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. Thank God, while there’s life, there’s hope!

But on one condition; that is, repentance. Judas did not repent. He was overwhelmed with remorse; but remorse is not repentance.

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His was merely a regret for consequences, not for guilt itself as an offence against a holy God. True repentance involves faith ; wherefore there is always a rainbow of hope in its tears. The monk Staupitz uttered a great truth when he said to Luther, who had come to him overwhelmed with contrition : “ My friend, your repentance is spurious unless it drives your soul to God.”

No matter how heavy the burden of guilt that weighs upon the sinner’s heart ; it remains true that God, for Christ’s sake, stands ready to remove it. “ The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin ! ” It is, therefore, never too late to mend.

3. PETER, THE DENIER (vers. 31–38).

All the world loves Peter ; but there is no denying that he was a great blunderer. His faults, however, were such as lean to virtue’s side. His overtopping weakness was self-confidence. He was so sure of himself that he was always walking on thin ice. It is a true saying, “ Pride goeth

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before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

He was repeatedly warned against his besetting sin. When he protested, "Although all should be offended in thee, yet will not I," his Lord replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, this night before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice." And that night the thing was done. In the open court of Caiaphas the high priest, where the soldiers had kindled a fire and were warming themselves, he protested even with an oath, "I know not the man," and immediately the cock crew.

So Peter fell. The man was "down and out." Weighed in the balance and found wanting! No, not yet. The crowing of the cock recalled him to himself, and, chancing to turn his eyes towards the judgment hall, he saw the Prisoner at the bar, who "looked upon him." Oh, that look of the Master! So full of tender reproach and entreaty! Then Peter remembered; and he "went out and wept bitterly." Shame, self-contempt and momentary despair were struggling to

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get the better of him. His pride was pitilessly laid low. But the end was not yet.

Let us observe how he struggled to his feet. It was on that very night that Judas also denied his Lord and betrayed Him. How was it that, while one went out and hanged himself the other was restored to favour? There are three reasons for this.

First, Peter really believed in Christ, while Judas did not. It was Peter who had recently witnessed the good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" No matter what his weakness might be, he was upheld by a strong conviction that Jesus was the long-looked-for Messiah, and that He had power on earth to forgive sin.

Second, he really loved Christ, while Judas did not. Faith begets love. A few days after this threefold denial, a group of the disciples were fishing in the early morning. In the twilight a lone figure was seen walking on the shore. The fishermen whispered among themselves, "It is the Lord!" and began to row toward the shore. But Peter could not wait; in a passion of repentant

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love he threw off his fisher's coat and leaped into the water. A few moments later he stood dripping in the presence of his Lord, who asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Alas, his old name! Why not "Peter, the man of stone"? Ignoring the reproach, he answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Again, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—"Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." A third time, as if to correspond with his three denials, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter answered, "Lord, thou knowest all things; my sin, my shame, my foolish pride, my self-reliance, my remorse, my fear; and thou knowest that despite all these I love thee." And thrice the Lord said, "Feed my sheep." Thus was he restored to the apostolate. At last he understood the foot-washing, and was willing that his Master should control him. From that time onward he never wavered in his devotion; and ultimately he earned his knighthood as the man of stone.

Third, he was loyal to Christ, through it

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all ; for as faith begets love, so love begets loyalty. His lamentable fall was once for all. How quickly he recovered ! On the Day of Pentecost we find him confronting the assembled multitude with the words, "Ye have taken the Lord and with wicked hands have crucified and slain him !" His life was in his hands when he thus spoke ; but there was no trembling of the knees nor shaking of the voice. This man had learned his lesson. Frank, fearless and enthusiastic we shall observe him henceforth in the forefront of affairs. He preaches to principalities and powers, meets persecution without blanching, becomes a familiar acquaintance of the scourge and prison damp, and braves the weariness of missionary toil until he passes through the gates of Rome to a martyr's death. A moment later, as he enters on his heavenly reward, we can imagine him saying to his Master with immeasurable joy : "Now, Lord ; thou knowest that I love thee ! "

On the Appian Way, not far outside the walls of Rome, there is a little church called *Domine quo Vadis.* In its floor is a marble

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slab bearing the imprint of a human foot, at which pilgrims cross themselves and bend their knees in worship. An ancient legend says that this is the footprint of the risen Christ who, on His way to Rome, met Peter fleeing from persecution ; and when Peter asked, "*Domine quo Vadis ?*" that is, "Lord, whither goest Thou ?" he answered, "I go to Rome to be crucified again for timid men like thee." This legend is not true to the character of Peter ; and, of course, there is nothing in the inspired record to confirm it.

I have indicated three reasons to account for the recovery of Peter, namely : he believed in Christ, loved Him and was loyal to Him. But there are three much better reasons for it.

The first is that Christ loved Peter. And, when all is said, we are saved not by our love for Christ, but by His love for us. In the account of His meeting with the disciples in the upper room it is recorded that "having loved them, he loved them to the end." He loved them without reference to any personal merit of theirs. He loved Peter, knowing

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that he would deny Him ; and He loved him to the very end, just as He loves us.

The second fact to account for the recovery of Peter is that Christ prayed for him. In one of His warnings He had said, “ Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” What a buttress of strength have we here ! If “the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much,” how much more avail-ing shall be the fervent effectual prayer of the only-begotten Son of God, who ever liveth to make intercession for us !

And thirdly, Christ stood by him. Had He not promised, “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee ”? How could Peter’s faith fail when Jesus was praying for him ? His joy failed ; his assurance failed ; his self-con-fidence failed ; but his faith failed not. “ It was night ” for him as for Judas, but the morning star was in his sky. His confidence was due to the prayer of his Lord. Blessed be His Name, we have no friend so near as He ! He is nearer than touching or seeing.

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To realise this is to discover the secret of the higher life. I never walk alone ; He walks with me. I never meet temptation alone ; He is my strong helper. I never address myself to duty alone ; it is always He and I. His yoke is for two. Where I go He goes with me, unless I wilfully part company with Him. I never sin, save when I fling Him off.

Not that Peter was never afraid ; it was in spite of fear that he stood to his colours. I have heard of a braggart in battle saying to his comrades, " You are afraid ; your knees are shaking," and getting the quick answer, " If you were half as frightened as I am you'd run." This is the touchstone of courage. Peter may have trembled, but he did not run. It was thus that he won out. No coward he. No quitter he. For thirty years of toil and trial he faced his duty, met his temptations, and finally died like a man.

We may take courage from the experience of this man. It is a notable fact that he, in whose early experience there was so little of promise, grew to be pre-eminently the Apostle of Character. No one of the sacred writers

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insists as earnestly as he on the importance of a symmetrical cultivation of the graces. It is Peter who sets for us that great "sum in addition" which is really the most difficult problem of life : "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity ; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Thus we learn the lesson of Peter's fall and recovery. It is not an easy matter to live a Christian life. We are called into a close grapple with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life." But who wants to live an easy life ? "The north wind makes Vikings."

" Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While thousands fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas ?

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Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy word."

If a man chooses to struggle on alone he can do so. In that event, however, let him not complain if the issue is against him. But blessed is the man who can go with fortitude into the fiery furnace, if need be, to be tried as gold is tried. He need not fear the final outcome, if, like the three youths of Babylon, he can realise in that fiery furnace the presence of the Son of God.

Let us take heed and beware, however, of self-confidence.

"Beware of Peter's word;
Nor confidently say,
'I never will deny my Lord,'
But grant I never may!"

If we fall it is through pride; if we rise again it is not in our own strength, but because the Lord stands by us.

IV.

THE TRIUNE GOD.

(John xiv.)

EVERYBODY loves this chapter. It is a favourite not only with those who have grown old in the Christian life, but with the little people as well. It touches the tenderest chords of our nature, because it records the farewell words of the Saviour in His last interview with His immediate friends. But there is another reason for its singular fascination, it sets forth the fundamental truth of the nature of God. The doctrine is profound; but it is presented—after the incomparable method of Christ—in terms so simple that a child can apprehend it.

I. GOD THE FATHER.

In one of the letters of Madame de Gasparin she writes: “If Christ had never

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said anything but this, ‘When ye pray, say, Our Father,’ it would have compensated for all the outlay of divine energy displayed in His incarnation and earthly life.”

True, the Fatherhood of God did not originate with Christ. There are intimations of it in some of the false religions : notably in the Norse mythology, where He is called “Al-fadir,” or Father of all. But in the teachings of Christ this generic intuition is pressed home with constant emphasis. In this interview, having announced His approaching departure, He comforted His disciples with the words, “In my Father’s house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Then up spoke Philip : “Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us.” Jesus answered, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?”

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Jesus here claims to be the revealer of the Father. As the eternal Logos or "Word," He is the intermediary of communication and acquaintance between God and man, precisely as language is the means of communication between us. His incarnation, when the Word became flesh, was, so to speak, the articulation of the divine speech. Thus the Father makes Himself known to us. Wherefore, "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

All our unaided conceptions of God the Father are vague and unsatisfying; but in Christ He is clearly revealed. When Jesus told His disciples that He was about to return to the Father's house, adding that they knew the way, Thomas said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" to which He replied, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." In other words, He had come not only to reveal God, but to provide a way by which the wandering might return to Him. This is provided through the atonement of the Cross. His pierced

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hands are stretched out towards the Father on one side and the prodigal on the other ; and thus the at-one-ment comes to pass. So the sinner is restored to the Father's house ; as Jesus said, "That where I am, there ye may be also" : at home, with God !

In the same connection one may clearly understand Christ's profound teaching on *prayer*. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. In that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father" (John xvi. 24-26). And yet in one supreme connection He will pray unto the Father for them. He will ask the abiding presence of the Comforter. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto

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you ; but if I depart I will send him unto you.”

Had the disciples known this they would have rejoiced indeed when He said : “I go unto the Father” ; for this meant that He was going to exercise a mightier influence within the Church than ever before. He was not only to sit again upon the throne of universal empire at the right hand of the majesty on high, but to receive the name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord “to the glory of *God the Father.*”

2. GOD THE SON.

The filiation of Christ with the Father is expressed in the most singular terms. There is a sense in which we are all children of God, since we are created in His likeness and after His image. There is another sense in which, having accepted Christ, we are received by adoption into the household of faith, so that we may say, “Abba, Father.” But Christ is not a son by creation, nor yet by

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adoption, but by generation : wherefore He and He alone is called “the only-begotten Son of God.”

As such He claims absolute equality with the Father. It is written of Him, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God : and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” He had not only reigned with the Father in pre-existent glory, but He was to return and reign again with Him. Here is the explanation of those words, “If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto my Father ; *for my Father is greater than I.*” How could He say that the Father was greater, if they were really equal ?

The solution of the difficulty is found in the “Kenosis,” or emptying of Christ ; for which turn to Phil. ii. 5-11 : “Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus ; who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,” etc. Of what did He empty

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himself when He became a man? Not of his Godhood,—which is unthinkable,—but of the glory of it. In stooping to conquer He divested Himself of all the visible tokens of divinity. In this state of humiliation He was, indeed, not equal with the Father; but He distinctly says that the glory which He had temporarily laid aside was to be reassumed when His redeeming work was done. The temporary abdication of His throne did not affect the validity of His divine claim. It is recorded that when He was on trial in the Sanhedrin the High Priest said, “I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” and that He answered, in the strongest possible form of affirmation, “Thou hast said! Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” We are given to understand that the High Priest regarded this as a distinct claim of equality with God; for he straightway rent his clothes, crying, “He hath

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spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" And with one accord they answered, "He is guilty of death." One word of recantation would have saved Him from the Cross; but He did not utter it! *He thus died for making Himself equal with God.*

And based upon this teaching of God the Son, we have another profound promise given to His disciples. It refers to their own service and equipment. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." This is explained by the fact that in going to the Father He was to send them the Holy Ghost to equip them for service. It is obvious that the greater works to which He referred were not miracles of healing; since as a matter of fact their miracles of healing were not greater than His. The reference is to the pre-eminent miracle of bringing souls to God.

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The visible results of the evangelism of Jesus during His ministry were comparatively meagre. At the time of His ascension there were approximately but five hundred converts to show for it. But in sending the Holy Ghost, He laid the foundation for greater works to be accomplished by His disciples. At Pentecost no less than three thousand were converted by the preaching of Peter in a single day. And, in the power of the Holy Ghost, such greater works have been going on ever since.

In the Methodist revival under the Wesleys it was estimated that eighty thousand souls were converted to Christ. And what shall we say more? The time would fail us to tell of Whitefield, and Finney and Moody and other evangelists who have made countless prisoners of hope. All this because Christ, in leaving His disciples, put them under the control and direction of the Spirit of power and of conquest. His promise was, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And that was a

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perpetual gift as He said, “He shall abide with you for ever.” The baptism of power is for all who are willing to receive it.

3. GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

“If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John xvi. 7).

Let it be observed that He consistently speaks of the Holy Ghost as a person; not as an influence or effluence, or as anything else that can be characterised by the neuter pronoun “it.” The influence of the Holy Ghost may be thus designated; but He Himself is set forth as a personality no less real than the Father or the Son.

He is here represented as one with the Father and the Son. He is in vital union with them, and in absolute accord as to all plans and purposes respecting the welfare of men.

He is spoken of as proceeding from both the Father and the Son. At this point we note the historic discussion which arose in the formulating of the Nicene Creed.

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The question was whether the Holy Ghost was sent by the Father only or by the Father and the Son. The controversy about the word “Filioque” resulted in the separation of the Eastern and the Western Church, which has continued until this day. The teaching of Christ in these premises is clear. He affirms that, as He was sent by the Father to accomplish the work of redemption, so the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and the Son (cf. xiv. 16 and 26 with xv. 26) to continue and conclude that work until the world shall be restored to God.

The Holy Ghost is represented also as the revealer of the Son. “He shall not speak of himself.—He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

The reticence of the Holy Ghost with reference to Himself is a fact of which every Christian is conscious in personal experience. It is an equally precious and obvious truth that He is ever bringing to our remembrance

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the things which Jesus said, and showing us more and more of Him.

In short, the Holy Ghost is the executive of the administration under which we are living. It may be said that there have been three administrations or economies in history thus far : that of the Father, which continued until the advent ; that of Christ, which was for a brief period of thirty years ; and that of the Holy Ghost, from then until now. At the conclusion of the ministry of Christ the reins of government were transferred to the Holy Ghost, who continues in control of the affairs of this world until the restitution of all things.

The Christian knows Him as the Comforter or Paraclete, that is, "one called to our side." In times of sorrow, of bereavement or adversity, He is ever present to help and sustain us.

The truth-seeker knows Him as the Spirit of truth. Jesus said, "He shall teach you all things.—He shall lead you into all truth" : that is, so far as such knowledge is necessary or desirable. One of the official

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functions of the Spirit is to throw light upon the pages of Holy Scripture, and to open the eyes of the truth-seeker that he may be able to understand it.

The Church knows Him as the energiser, who provides all necessary equipment for service. He is called, therefore, the Spirit of power. The pentecostal baptism of fire and power is from Him. All the great enterprises of evangelisation are led and controlled by Him.

4. THE ONE IN THREE.

Having surveyed the teaching of Jesus as to the nature of God in this wonderful chapter, we find ourselves apparently in a grave difficulty. He affirms that the Father is God ; also that the Son is God ; also that the Holy Ghost is God. Are we then to conclude that He believed in three Gods ? If not, why not ? The dilemma is obvious ; how shall we escape it ?

If it be clear that Christ taught the Godhood of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, it is equally clear that He

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believed that there is only one God. Over and over again He affirmed this ; as when he said to the woman of Samaria, "God is a spirit ; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." As a loyal Jew He stood committed to the truth of the Scriptures, whose opening words are, "In the beginning God," and whose consistent teaching is that there is only one God, and that there is no other beside Him.

A scribe once came to Jesus asking, "Which is the first commandment of all?" He answered—pointing perhaps to the frontlet which the scribe wore upon his forehead bearing this inscription—"Hear, O Israel ; the Lord thy God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." In His whole teaching He insisted on the validity and binding force of the Decalogue, as the great symbol of the moral law, whose foundation is laid in the words, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house

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of bondage ; thou shalt have no other gods before me."

But how could God be one and still be three? Here emerges the mystery of the ineffable Trinity. And, be it observed, Christ does not here or elsewhere undertake to explain it. Why should He? If there are State secrets in connection with the administration of every secular government, shall there be none in the government of God?

If we refuse to accept what we cannot comprehend, we shall find ourselves in trouble on every hand and every moment of the day. We live in a world full of mysteries that nobody can explain. There is more of mystery in a single eyelash or drop of blood than any scientist on earth can find out. A man is tripartite, consisting of body, soul and spirit; explain that if you can. Call all your scientists and philosophers in council to define life, or to make clear the influence of mind over matter, and they will confess themselves at their wits' end. Tell me how my hand is

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lifted at the behest of my will and I will undertake to make perfectly clear not only the problem of the Triune God, but every other mystery in the province of the spiritual life.

In point of fact, all that we can demand is that a proposition laid before us shall not be contrarational. The doctrine of the Trinity is mysterious, but not more so than ten thousand other facts which are received without demur because we cannot avoid it. Let it suffice that our Lord affirms this doctrine as a fact. God is three persons in one substance ; he is Tri-unity, or three in one. This baffles but does not contradict our reason ; wherefore we can afford to leave the solution of the problem with Him : as it is written, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

The interview of Jesus with His disciples now under consideration closes with the words, “These things have I spoken unto you while yet abiding with you ; but the Comforter . . . shall teach you all things.” It may be that under the influence of the Spirit

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we shall ultimately have a clearer conception of the nature of God. We certainly shall, if God deems it profitable for us. Meanwhile let us rest in what He has been pleased to make known to us.

The benediction is this : “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Thanks be to God for that sweet bequest ! The secret of peace is in taking Christ at His word.

The bulk of our unrest, of our doubt and despondency, is due to prying into secrets that do not concern us. “The glory of God is to conceal a thing.” Alas ! that we should call ourselves disciples, and still be unwilling to follow in the path marked out. To sit at the Master’s feet and hearken to His teaching, willing to accept His word and heed His bidding, this is to find the peace that passeth all understanding ; this is to enter into the assurance of faith ; this is to rest in Him, having our lives hid with Christ in God.

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NOTE.

The words at the close of chap. xiv., "Arise, let us go hence," do not mean that the meeting was here broken up. Nor do they signify that Christ left the house with His disciples and continued His discourse on the way to Gethsemane, or (as Lightfoot intimates) at Bethany a week later. Nor do they suggest (as held by Alford and others) that He rose from the table and stood during the remainder of the interview. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the words referred to are out of place, and belong further on. The feast, of which Christ and His disciples had been partaking, being now concluded, they would naturally leave the guest-chamber with its disordered table and adjourn to some other room, or possibly to an open court. At this point the circle of hearers was probably enlarged by the addition of the good-man with his wife and servants and other followers of Christ. The remainder of the discourse would therefore have a larger scope than when the Master was speaking to the Twelve alone ; and so we shall find it.

V.

THE CHRISTIAN.

(John xv.)

It is recorded that the disciples “were first called Christians in Antioch.” The name was probably given in derision ; but it was accepted as a designation of honour. Peter wrote, “If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God in this name.” In one of the prayers of the Clementine Liturgy we find these words : “We give Thee thanks that we are called by the name of Christ, and are thus reckoned as Thine own.”

If we look in the Dictionary for a definition, we shall find it given thus : “Christian : a believer in Christ.” The poet Alexander Pope, himself an unbeliever, defined a Christian as “the highest style of man.” The

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Karens were accustomed to call Adoniram Judson, their missionary, “Jesus Christ’s man.” This approaches very nearly the definition given by Christ Himself in the parable of the Vine and its Branches, in which it is made to appear that a Christian is one who is in vital union with Him.

We have in this parable the biography of a Christian in brief.

First, as to his birth.—This occurs when one accepts Christ. It is a new birth, or “gain-birth,” as the early Christians were accustomed to call it. It is a veritable regeneration, a turning “right-about face”; as when Saul of Tarsus, one moment “breathing out slaughter” against the followers of Christ, the next moment heard Christ calling him, and answered, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

It is a coming out of the world; as Christ says, “I have chosen you out of the world; wherefore the world hateth you.” The Christian is uncompromisingly at odds with the world; inasmuch as he lives not for the things that are seen and temporal, but for the things

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which are unseen and eternal. In other words, he is in the world, but not of it.

In coming out of the world he comes not only unto Christ but into Him ; so that thenceforth he can say, “My life is hid with Christ in God.”

It is just as well to understand this matter ; since the tendency of present-day religion is to eliminate Christ from Christianity, by reducing it either to a system of theology or a code of benevolent ethics. If Christ’s own definition of Christianity is correct, then He cannot be bowed off the premises in this way. The Christian is related to Christ precisely as the branch is to the vine. The union is absolutely vital : so vital that Christ is everything to him ; Alpha and Omega, the beginning of every purpose and the end of every aspiration ; first, last, midst, and all in all.

Second, as to his manner of life.—This is elsewhere briefly and comprehensively set forth in the word “follow”—a great word which cannot be too deeply impressed upon us.

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The Christian follows Christ as a disciple or pupil. This means, if it means anything, that he believes what his Lord believes, and accepts His teaching as final. He has no philosophy of his own, no theology of his own, no ethics of his own. No matter what the books say, no matter what others think ; the word of the divine Teacher is ultimate for him. In his desire to know about the personality of God, the veracity of Scripture, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, or any other problem of the spiritual life, he asks only what his Teacher has to say about it. This ends all controversy for him.

The fact is that when a man has accepted Christ as the only-begotten Son of God, he has resolved the one problem which is the key to all others. For Christ is not merely a Teacher of truth ; He is The Truth ; so that the quest ends in Him.

And the Christian follows also as a servant. The test is indicated in the words, " If ye do whatsoever I command you." The Christian's rule of conduct is to do what pleases

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Christ. This is his complete system of ethics. He avoids sin on the one hand, because his Lord hates it ; and aspires after holiness on the other, because his Lord enjoins it. To know his Lord's will is to do it. There is no questioning, no faltering, no further reasoning about it.

He follows Christ, also, as his friend. A great word this ! “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth ; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.” The one thing in particular which was held in the mutual confidence of the Father and the Son was the Eternal plan for the salvation of the world ; and with respect to this matter the Lord takes His disciples into His confidence, into the very innermost place of His pavilion, where He reveals to them this wonderful purpose of God.

Third, as to the business of the Christian.— It is, in simple terms, to lend a hand in carrying out the purpose of God. Christ says that He was sent into the world “to seek

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and to save the lost." And He says further, "As the Father has sent me into the world so send I you." The inference is plain; the business of the Christian is to seek and save. It was to this end that Christ Himself "went about doing good." His miracles of healing were merely incidental to His great purpose, which was to deliver men from the shame and bondage of sin.

The business of the Christian, as thus set forth, is indicated in the word "fruit"; on which our Lord in this parable lays the deepest possible emphasis. He iterates and reiterates it; "fruit," "much fruit," "more fruit"; "so shall ye be my disciples." It is greatly to be feared that we have in large measure lost this keynote of our Master's teaching. We place the grave emphasis on personal character and social benevolence rather than on the winning of souls. "This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." To follow Christ is to be continually "doing good as we have opportunity unto all men"; but the objective point of all our doing is to join hands

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with Christ in bringing the world back to God.

Fourth, as to the Christian's preparation for his business.—The branch is not left to take care of itself ; the Father and the Son unite in taking care of it.

The “Father is the husbandman.” As such he looks after the fruitfulness of the branches. The question is asked, “Does God send trouble?” As well ask, Does the husbandman enter the vineyard with a pruning-knife? The Master says, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away ; and every branch that beareth fruit he cleanseth (or pruneth) it, that it may bear more fruit.” Here is the clue to the mystery of discipline. It is not a misfortune but a privilege—one of the highest privileges of the Christian life. It is an evidence of sonship ; as Paul says, “God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, then are ye bastards and not sons. We have had fathers of our flesh to chasten

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us and we gave them reverence ; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits and live ? For they indeed chastened us as seemed good to them, but he for our profit ” ; that is, that we might be better qualified for service. The husbandman cuts back all rank and useless growth, that the branch may bear more fruit for him.

And the Son conspires with the Father in preparing us for service. His work is that of constant communion with us. This is set forth in the word “abide” ; which is also deeply emphasised. “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except as it abide in the vine, so neither can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit ; for apart from me ye can do nothing.”

In this “abiding” we have the true conception of prayer. I say nothing against the stated acts of prayer ; but urge rather that spirit of prayer which gives its only value and significance to the occasional

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bending of the knees. We are enjoined to "pray without ceasing," that is, to be in constant communion with Christ; not only when we bow at the mercy-seat, but every hour of the day.

Is it possible thus to abide in Christ? The man who leaves his home in the morning seems to part company with his wife, but does he? In his shop or office he is so absorbed in secular cares that perhaps he never thinks of her; yet there is never a moment of the day when he and the elect lady are not one; so vitally one that the indwelling assurance of her love is the inspiration of everything he does. So the Christian may not always be thinking of Christ; but deep down in his subconsciousness there is the joy in His presence. The promise holds good: "Lo, I am with you alway: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And this, consciously or unconsciously, is the great dynamic of the Christian's life.

It is to those who thus continue in prayer without ceasing that the promise applies,

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“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” This promise is absolutely unlimited ; but it is conditioned on our abiding in Him. The man who supposes that he can kneel down and make his requests and then cut loose and go as he pleases, has no claim whatever on that promise ; but he who abides in fraternal relation with Christ and filial relation with God, may literally ask what he will with an assurance that it shall be given unto him.

And closely allied with this communion of the believer with Christ, as a preparation for service, is his communion with other believers. The branches are one in the vine. There is, therefore, no break in the continuity of the parable when Christ says, “These things I command you, that ye love one another.” A Christian will naturally incline towards those of his own household, even as birds of a feather flock together. He is bound to them by a singular tie. He calls them “brethren” because he is brought into spiritual kinship with them

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by Christ, who is the elder brother of them all.

It is in this connection that Christ lays down the new commandment, “that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.” Let us ask again, Why should this be called a “new commandment”? Wherein does it differ from the old commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”; or from the Golden Rule, “Do as ye would be done by”? In this, that the disciples are to love one another not as they love themselves, but “even as Christ loved them.” There is a vast difference here. Self is wholly ruled out of the reckoning in this case. Christ’s love was a self-denying, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing love ; so must theirs be. To realise this is to grow strong in the fellowship of the Church, which is “the body of Christ.” Herein lies the secret of the communion of saints. The more closely we commune with Christ, the more devoutly and intensely do we love His people ; even as the branches draw nearer to each other as they approach the vine. And all this is

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preparatory and conducive to fruit-bearing, that is, faithful service as "fishers of men."

Fifth, as to the Christian's destiny.—He is saved, as a matter of course. So much is taken for granted. The branch is in no possible danger while it abides in the vine. Let no true Christian worry about his salvation. The branch is not expected to prune itself, or cultivate itself, or preserve its own life. The Vine looks after that. Just here is the difference between Bunyan's Christian and Christ's Christian. The pilgrim who set out from the City of Destruction was deeply concerned about his own welfare. He was constantly getting into trouble in the Slough of Despond and under the shadow of Doubting Castle, and all the while keeping his eye on the far-off Celestial City in a more or less desperate hope of reaching it. But Christ's Christian is a self-forgetful man, so busily engaged in doing for others that he must needs content himself with the assurance of faith. It is enough that he can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is

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able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The one thing about which this Christian busies himself is fruit. He follows his Lord in self-denying service in the behalf of men. He sees his friends and associates groping in the dark, like blind men feeling their way along the wall, and he brings them to Jesus that they may find everlasting life. These are the clusters of this fruitful branch. The true Christian, like his Master, has a burning passion for souls.

He hopes some day to win the commendation, "Well done, good servant : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What is this "joy of the Lord"? It is the joy of beholding "the fruit of the travail of his soul," a multitude saved by his vicarious pain. This was in the mind of Jesus when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." The eternal joy of the Christian will be in the realisation of the promise, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and

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they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." This is the consummation and final success of life. For as Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit"; and it is a true saying, "The chief end of man is to glorify God."

Finally, as to the Christian's death.—Not a word is said about it! The fruitful branch shall abide for ever in the vine. The Christian never dies.

But what of the unfruitful branch? "It is cast forth, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." The reference here is not to final punishment, but to the removal of the unprofitable. They are disposed of like the dead leaves of autumn. Their doom is eternal unprofitableness; as Jesus said of the fig-tree that put forth professional leaves but bore no figs, "No man eat fruit of thee for ever." Oh, dreadful fate!

But the fruitful branch is never severed from the vine. Death to the Christian is merely an episode in life. He closes his

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eyes, opens them, and goes living right on. He that has borne fruit shall continue to bear fruit, more fruit, for ever! His death is promotion. He has served an apprenticeship here which fits him for higher tasks further on. This is his “penny at evening.” This is everlasting life: to be living eternally to the glory of God!

Is this too high a standard of the Christian life? It is, alas! so high that all fall short of it. There is not one who must not say, “I count not myself to have apprehended”; but blessed is he who can add, “This one thing I do: I stretch forth unto the things which are before, and press toward the mark!”

In this parable an ideal is presented; and the best we can say for ourselves is that we aspire toward it. If we are blamed by those who are not Christians for falling short, let me remind them of the words that were written by the painter Apollodorus above his pictures in the pagan temples: “'Tis no hard thing to reprehend me; but let the men that blame me mend me.” It is not

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an easy thing to live a Christian life. Let them try it.

But, oh, it is sublime to aim so high. We are not what we ought to be ; we are not what we mean to be ; but by the grace of God we are what we are. And blessed be His name, we have all eternity before us ! The Master said, “ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify God.” If we here reflect too dimly the light that shines so splendidly in our Saviour’s face, we find comfort in the hope that in the passing æons of eternity our path shall be as the light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

VI.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

(John xvi. 5-15.)

THE Lord had already spoken to the Twelve of the coming of the Comforter ; He has now something to say respecting the same matter to the larger assembly, which represented not the ministry alone, but the entire Church.

I. THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

It is easy to understand the expediency of Christ's coming into this world ; for what a dreary, sunless world it would have been without Him ! It is easy to see, moreover, that it was expedient for Him to remain here in order to teach truth and righteousness, and lay the foundations of His Kingdom among men. But how could it be expedient that He should go away ?

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It was because he found the fulcrum of his lever outside the world that his name is mentioned among the great lawgivers of the world to-day.

But Christ has nothing to say here of such considerations as these. The reason which He gives for His going away, is that He was to leave behind Him a bequest which should be a manifold equivalent for every loss. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

So He said farewell and went His way. What then ? For a time His followers were overwhelmed with sorrow, feeling that all was over. "I go a-fishing," said one ; and the others said, "We also go with thee."

But after His resurrection, Christ reappeared and remained with His disciples forty days, long enough to satisfy them that whereas He had died He was now alive for evermore, and to mark out for them the plan of a campaign which was to eventuate in the restoration of the world to God. At the close of that period He met them at

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Olivet, breathed on them, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost !” and gave them the great commission, “Go, evangelise !” Then the heavens opened to receive Him.

Ten days later, while the disciples were praying in an open court in Jerusalem, the Spirit came with a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind ; and the beginning of the new administration was signalled by the conversion of three thousand souls in a single day !

We are living in this dispensation of the Spirit ; and it is obviously of the utmost importance that we should understand the meaning of it. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal something or other ; an influence felt in a vague, indefinable way. He is the third person of the Godhead. His personality is as real as that of the Father or that of the Son. He is the Executive of this dispensation ; under whose authority and control we as followers of Christ meet all responsibilities and discharge all duties.

It is nearly nineteen hundred years since Jesus advised His disciples that they were to act thenceforth under this direction ; and

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there are still twelve hundred millions of people in the world who have never heard or are wholly unconvinced by His gospel ! Nor can the Church expect to realise its best possibilities so long as its ministers and members fail to recognise the leadership of the Spirit, and the fact that they themselves, in order to meet their responsibilities under the great commission, must be baptized with fire and power, and made conscious partners in the transcendent work of the Spirit of God.

2. A THREEFOLD FUNCTION.

The influence of the Holy Ghost, as the great dynamic in human history, is here clearly indicated in the teaching of Christ. He says, “When the Comforter is come, he will reprove the world in respect of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come.”

First, “He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me.”

The average man has a totally inadequate sense of sin. At the best, he regards it as a violation of law. He sees clearly enough that theft, arson, forgery, murder and adultery

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are sins. In fact, however, they are merely symptoms of sin, like eruptions which indicate an inward fever. And when we try to cure sin with chains and prisons and scaffold trees, we are only doctoring its visible symptoms.

But here comes the Holy Ghost to correct this misapprehension. He teaches us that sin in any form whatsoever is not only a violation of law, divine or human, but enmity against God. This is getting down to the root of the matter. The thief, the drunkard and the drab are sinners, certainly ; any child knows that. But how about the smug, decorous, respectable malefactor who does not wear his vices on his sleeve for daws to peck at ? What about the man who keeps within the bounds of statutes and ordinances, but has no place in his life for God. Is he also a sinner ? The Holy Ghost says yes. Why ? Because he breathes God's air, lives on His bounty, is a constant beneficiary of His goodness, and yet has not the grace to say "I thank you ! " If this were all, it would be bad enough ; but the head and front of his offending is that, when God sends His

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only-begotten Son into the world to die for his redemption, he will have none of it. So said Peter to the assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost. "Ye have taken Jesus, and with wicked hands have crucified him!" They were guilty of a thousand sins; but this was the head and front of all their offending. To reject Christ is to crucify Him afresh; and what a sin have we here in the light of this gospel age! This is the revolt of the sinner against God. It is worse than theft and murder and adultery rolled into one. But tell that to the respectable sinner and he will smile at you. The Holy Ghost must come and uncover his heart. And when the Holy Ghost speaks, His words shall be like a two-edged sword which divideth asunder the soul and spirit. Now see the sinner pricked to the heart, and hear him crying, "What shall I do?"

Second, it is the function of the Holy Ghost, as Jesus says, to "reprove the world of righteousness: because I go unto the Father, and ye see me no more."

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The world's idea of righteousness is as defective as its conception of sin. It has one form of righteousness which it calls morality, that is, living within the prescript of the law. This is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Jesus said to the young ruler, "He that doeth the law shall live by it"; but suppose a man breaks the law, what then? "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" And in all the world there is not a mortal man who has kept it.

There is another form of righteousness which consists in obedience to ceremonial law. This is superficial at the best, and those who practise it, unless they have a heart of holiness, are "as whitened sepulchres, fair without, but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." This is that form of religion of which the Saviour said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God."

The two forms of goodness here indicated are like the signs on a shopkeeper's windows,

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which may mean something or nothing, according as there are corresponding goods on his shelves. And those who trust in either one of them will be left lamenting at the last, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags !”

The Holy Ghost comes to correct these definitions of righteousness by pointing to Christ, who was the only righteous man that ever lived in this world of ours. He was the only one who ever lived up to the high level of the law. He was the only one who ever “brought the bottom of His life up to the top of His light.” He was the only one who ever dared to issue the challenge, “Who layeth anything to my charge ?” without being laughed at. He was the *Dikaios* of whom Plato dreamed, “the just one.” He was the only man who ever was sentenced to death by a judge who felt obliged to say, “I find no fault in him at all.”

It is the special and particular function of the Holy Ghost to call Him to our remembrance. Christ has gone to the Father, so that the world seeth Him no more ; but the

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world can never forget Him; because the Holy Ghost is ever pointing to Him and saying, "Behold the Man! Behold the perfect manner of His life! Behold Him, and be like Him!" In the imitation of Christ we find the Spirit's definition of righteousness. Such righteousness is more than conformity with law; it is conformity with God.

So the Holy Ghost turns upside down the world's conceptions of sin on the one hand and of righteousness on the other. Here are two men going up to the temple to pray. One of them is a Doctor of Divinity, with broad phylacteries and a scriptural frontlet between his eyes; his prayer runs on this wise, "I thank thee, God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The other, standing afar off, dare not lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smiting upon his breast cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The world takes these men

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at their own valuation : the Pharisee is a saint, and the publican a reprobate. But the Holy Ghost has this to say, “The Pharisee is the sinner and the publican the saint ; because the latter, feeling his sin, is on his way back to God.”

Third, the Holy Ghost “reproves the world of judgment, because the Prince of this World is judged.”

The current thought of judgment is as inadequate as the conceptions of sin and righteousness already referred to. On the one hand, there are those who think, like Job’s miserable comforters, that judgment is a system of exact retribution going on here and now. A man sits in a draught and contracts rheumatism, or he overeats and has dyspepsia : thus the laws of nature are continually exacting their *quid pro quo*, as indicated in the Buddhist “law of consequences.”

There are others who restrict the thought of judgment to the Great Day, when all that are in their graves shall come forth to render an account of their deeds.

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Both of these conceptions are true so far as they go ; but they do not exhaust the matter in hand.

The Holy Ghost comes to advise us that there is another sort of judgment going on every day before our eyes. Who is being judged ? The Prince of this World. We are in the midst of a great controversy. Light and darkness are met as on a mighty battlefield. Events are hastening on toward a final Armageddon, when the red dragon shall be cast into the pit. Here is the key to history. Read it as Christ did when He said, "I saw Satan fall from heaven !" Read judgment in the newspapers, between the lines of passing events. The Holy Ghost gives us the clue. "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world !" History is judgment. There is judgment in the story of Waterloo and Gettysburg, the Crusades and the Reformation, the fall of the Bastile and the signing of Magna Charta. Christ goeth forth conquering and to conquer ! He hath upon His vesture and upon His thigh a

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name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords." See the white plume of the Captain of our Salvation in the forefront of events, leading onward, ever onward to the Golden Age! Fall in and lend a hand! The blast of the trumpet which shall usher in the Great Day will be the signal for the final sitting of a Court which has been in session through all the ages.

So the three great facts in the province of the spiritual life, to wit, sin, righteousness and judgment, are defined and opened up to us by the Holy Ghost. He anoints our eyes with eyesalve that we may see. He dispels doubt, cures hypochondria and makes optimists. He hushes our misereres and attunes our hearts to hosannas and hallelujahs. The shadows disappear at His bidding, and, lo, the mountains are full of horses and chariots!

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Come as the light to illumine our dull understandings! Come as the morning dew to refresh our weary energies and give us hopeful and

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joyous views of spiritual truth ! Come as the fire to enkindle within us new zeal for godliness and new devotion to the Kingdom of truth and righteousness ! Come and call Jesus to our remembrance ! For without Thee our eyes grow dim and vision fails. Show us Christ, crucified to atone for sin, which is enmity against God ! Show us Christ, the living exemplar of that righteousness which is conformity with God ! Show us Christ, the conquering Judge who leads the great campaign of progress so effectively that the gates of hell cannot prevail against Him ! Come, Holy Spirit, come ! Give us a bright vision of Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning of every high hope and noble aspiration, and the end of every ambition that is worthy of the children of men ! Show us Christ ; first, last, midst and all in all !

“ ’Tis Thine to cleanse the heart,
To sanctify the soul,
To pour fresh life on every part,
And new create the whole.

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Dwell, therefore, in our hearts ;
Our minds from bondage free ;
Then shall we know and praise and love
The Father, Son, and Thee."

VII.

THE PAROUSIA.

(John xvi. 16-33.)

OUR Lord in this interview with His disciples told them He was about to reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was"; but He assured them that He would presently return, and exhorted them to live in expectation of that event. "A little while, and ye shall not see me," he said; "and again a little while, and ye shall see me."

His words puzzled them: "What is this that he saith, 'a little while'? We cannot understand it." But, however they may have been perplexed by His manner of speech, they never entertained the slightest doubt as to the fact of His coming again in the fulness of time.

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I. THE FACT.

The doctrine of the *Parousia*, or second coming of Christ, was joyfully cherished in the early Church. There are approximately a thousand allusions in His teaching and that of His apostles with reference to it. In the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew we have what is familiarly known as the parousia discourse of Jesus: and, whatever of uncertainty there may be as to its interpretation in detail and particular, there is no room whatever for uncertainty as to the promise it contains. The teaching of the apostles is of the same tenor. It may be found in the last words of Paul: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” There is an intimation of it in the last words

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of Peter : “There shall come in the last days scoffers saying, Where is the promise of his coming ?” It is clearly set forth in the last words of James : “Be ye patient, therefore, unto the coming of the Lord, as the husbandman waiteth for his fruits. Be patient ; establish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” Also in the last words of John, sole survivor of the Old Guard, who from his desert home in Patmos heard his Lord calling, “Behold, I come quickly !” and answered “Amen ! Even so come, Lord Jesus !” Thus the early Christians strengthened themselves in the glorious hope.

Our faith may tremble, but the promise is Yea and Amen. It is recorded that when He ascended from the Mount of Olives, the eyes of the disciples following Him as He disappeared through the open skies, two angels stood by them in shining apparel who said, “Why gaze ye up into heaven ? He shall so come as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

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2. ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

In this detailed account of His ascension we have a clearer light on the prophecy under consideration. It means, *first*, that He is to come personally, "as ye have seen him go." The promise cannot be explained away by referring it to an influential presence. It is true that Christ has been the commanding figure in history ever since those days. The power of all the Cæsars and Alexanders and Napoleons combined is not comparable with His. But this does not answer the demands of the promise before us.

Nor can it be disposed of as a reference to the miracle of Pentecost. He did, indeed, so pour out His Spirit on that memorable day that His Church was baptized with fire and power for the great campaign before it. But this was manifestly not the coming referred to.

Nor was that promise fulfilled in the coming of Christ at the destruction of Jerusalem. This was with no such benevolent glory as when He ascended with

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outstretched hands of benediction into the heavens that were opened to receive Him.

Nor are the conditions of this promise met by the sympathetic coming of Christ referred to in the words, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." Here is a splendid truth, which is realised in the experience of every true follower of Christ ; but that does not exhaust the matter in hand. The *parousia* lies deeper yet.

It means, *second*, that He is to appear visibly ; that is, ye shall see Him come "as ye have seen him go." We are to see Him *hunc oculis*, "with these very eyes." He will be recognised as the same Christ who lived and suffered among men. His hands will be the same that ministered to their needs, His feet the same that walked along the paths of Palestine, His heart the same that throbbed responsive to human want, and broke at last under the burden of human sin. The marks of His vicarious pain will be seen in His hands and side, the *stigmata* by which the world is to know its crucified and triumphant Lord. He did not become

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incarnate simply as a temporary expedient or for a transient purpose ; He remains for evermore the incarnate Son of God. Thus John the Evangelist saw Him enthroned “as a lamb that had been slain.”

It means, *third*, that His coming will be glorious ; not as it was at Bethlehem : a mother looking fondly down into her baby’s face ; a group of rustics at the doorway of the cave, standing on tiptoe peering in ; a few shepherds on their knees about the Child ; a company of wise men on camels approaching to lay their gold and myrrh and frankincense at His feet. Not so will be our Lord’s final advent. The tokens of His attendant majesty are definitely given us.

The trumpet shall sound ; the trumpet of a great angel going on before, as a herald before the King. He will then appear in a pavilion of cloud ; not like the dust-cloud that rises before a royal retinue on an earthly highway ; but the historic Shechinah, the “most excellent glory” in which the Lord has manifested Himself again and again ; the same cloud that led the children of Israel on

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their journey through the wilderness. He will be attended by a multitude of angels. The shining seats of heaven will be emptied to furnish His retinue on that great Palm Sunday when hosannas are to fill the earth as they fill the heavens now. “The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands before Him. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

It means, *fourth*, that His coming will be beneficent. As He lifted His hands in blessing when He vanished through the skies, so shall He come again saying, “Peace be unto you.” His fan will be in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. Sin shall be swept utterly from the face of the earth. No more trail of the serpent, no more shame and remorse, no more wrong and oppression, no more war and desolation, no more envy and hypocrisy, no more sin! Wherefore

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the followers of Christ shall rejoice in that day like a woman who, gazing on the face of her newborn child, finds her “sorrow turned to joy.” For the Tabernacle of God shall be among men, and He will dwell with them ; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God.

3. THE TIME.

But when shall these things be ? We have no such definite information as would enable us to determine the exact time. His prediction is veiled in “dark sayings.” To the disciples at Olivet who asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?” His answer was, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” On another occasion He had said : “Let no man deceive you. For many shall come, saying Lo, here ! or Lo, there ! Believe them not. For of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” He shall come “at an hour when ye think not.”

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Let it be remembered that with the Lord a millennium is as an handbreadth of time. Peter says, “ He is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Here is the reason for His delay. It is not because He has forgotten, but because He is long-suffering toward the children of men.

It is recorded that when William the Conqueror came to England the Barons prostrated themselves before him and took this vow : “ I do become thy liege man, for life and limb and earthly regard ; and I do pledge myself to keep faith and loyalty with thee, for life and death, as God shall help me.” Thus should we be ever renewing our consecration to Christ. For the highway must be cast up for His coming : the stones of stumbling must be gathered out. There is something for us to do : and when it is done, oh, happy day ! The heavens shall part asunder and His people shall cry, “ Behold Him ! ”

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Meanwhile, blessed are they that love His appearing. He said there should be "weeping and lamenting" before the promised day ; but let not our faith misgive us. He that shall come will come, and will make no tarrying. "These words have I spoken unto you," said Jesus, "that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer : I have overcome the world ! "

4. THE COMMAND TO WATCH.

We wait : and while we wait we watch. The word appears again and again in the teaching of Christ. Watch ! Watch ! Watch ! But how are we to watch ? Like those that impatiently look out of their windows ? Nay, He has told us : "Let your loins be girt about, and your lights burning." A man lights his lamp for an expected guest, and girds his loins when he addresses himself to an important task. Watch, therefore, in the discharge of duty, for the coming of the Son of Man !

At the close of the Tenth Century the

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Christian world thought that the end was drawing nigh, since this was the close of the cycle of a thousand years. The signs were all favourable. The social deeps were broken up ; there were wars, famines, pestilences, natural convulsions, confusion everywhere ; "signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath." It was believed by Christians generally that the Lord was surely at hand. In the last year of the century the impending event was proclaimed from Christian pulpits. Industry was suspended. The Emperor of Germany announced "the Truce of God," and went about in a garb of penitence preaching it. On the final day of the year the people clothed themselves in ascension robes and at sunset betook themselves to the roofs of the houses, the porches of cathedrals and the open fields, where they stood waiting. The hours passed until midnight. Midnight passed ; the stars began to fade. The first gleam of morning came ; and then the Christian world, heaving a sigh of relief as of one coming out of a paralysis of mingled fear and hope, went back to its work.

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Then came the Crusades, the greatest movement in history prior to the Reformation. The monks, led by Peter the Hermit, with kings and courtiers, went everywhere proclaiming the conquest of the Holy Land. "It is the will of God!" We must do something toward the coming of the Son of Man! They were still waiting, but waiting at what they believed to be their appointed tasks. Thus Christ is ever saying to His people, "Watch!" Watch and be sober; watch with your loins girt! Let your door be on the latch! It may be at evening, or at midnight, or in the morning that He will come. Watch, therefore! "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

VIII.

THE SACERDOTAL PRAYER.

(John xvii.)

No man ever prayed as Jesus did. He was in such vital union with the Father that prayer was second nature to Him. Nay, rather it was first nature to Him. He knew how to commune with God.

On one occasion, being overheard by His disciples, who perceived that He was possessed of a secret unknown to them, they said, "Lord, teach us how to pray." His answer was, "*After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

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For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen."

We are accustomed to speak of this as "The Lord's prayer." It was, however, not the Lord's prayer, but our prayer. It was a prayer in which He Himself could scarcely join ; because His relation with the Father was quite different from ours. He nowhere includes Himself in the same sort of filiation as ours ; since He was "the only - begotten Son." The real Lord's Prayer is that which is recorded here, in the seventeenth chapter of John. This is a prayer which none but He could make ; nay, more, which no mortal man could offer without such a measure of presumption as would amount to blasphemy against God.

It is to this sacerdotal prayer that our thought is now directed : "And Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come."

It was the last night of His sojourn on earth. He had preached His last sermon to them ; had presided at the last supper ; had given them His last bequest, saying,

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“Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give unto you ” ; and now He makes His last prayer for them.

“I pray not for the world,” He says, “but for them which thou hast given me.” He then proceeds to ask four things in their behalf ; and in our behalf, also, for He distinctly makes mention of “them also which shall believe on me through their word.” His great prayer includes all true Christians to the end of time.

In these four petitions we have a summary of all that makes life worth living or heaven worth longing for.

i. THAT THEY MAY BE KEPT.

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world ; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

He had Himself been sent into the world to accomplish a definite task ; and He was not to depart out of the world until He could say, “I have finished the work which

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thou gavest me to do." As the Father had sent Him into the world, so He sent His disciples into the very thick of its toil and conflict to remain there until their work was accomplished. In the meantime He said, "Whither I go ye cannot come"; but in due time, having been faithful, they were to follow Him.

He foresaw the trials and persecutions that awaited them. The sword was being sharpened; the faggots were being kindled for them. He heard the roaring of the lions in the amphitheatre, and, by His effectual intercession, prepared them to meet it. In that company in the upper room was James, who was presently to be slain with the sword; and most of the others, if not all, were destined to climb to heaven by the steep ascent of martyrdom. He did not pray that they might be kept alive: for life is not worth living when faith and honour die. His desire was that they might be kept faithful unto death.

He foresaw also the divers temptations that awaited them; temptations to turn aside

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from the straight path of righteousness into the byways of sin ; temptations to swerve from their loyalty to truth into the easy follies of unbelief. For false teachers were to “ creep in ” among them, whose clever presentations of error would be calculated to deceive the very elect. He did not pray that they might not be exposed to these temptations ; but that, being so exposed, they might be kept from wandering into sin and unbelief.

Oh, how much this prayer of the Master is needed to-day ! We are living in a very cyclone of controversy, and in constant danger of being swept away from our moorings by adverse winds. There is not a single fundamental truth of the gospel which is not denied or speciously explained away in these days ; the Deity of Jesus, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the reality of the supernatural, the very personality of God !

The two pieces of divine armour which we most need, under these circumstances, are the girdle of truth and the sandals of the gospel. It was the spiked sandals of a

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Roman knight that enabled him, when at close quarters with his adversary, "to withstand, and having done all to stand."

But the doctrine of the "perseverance of saints" rests on no frail foundation of human ability. We are saved not by our feeble hold on Christ, but by His mighty grip on us ; as He said, "No man shall pluck you out of my hand." Wherefore, let us lean hard and trust to His great promise—

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
He will not, He will not, desert to His foes ;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
He'll never, no never, no never forsake."

2. THAT THEY MIGHT BE SANCTIFIED.

The word sanctification is used in two different senses. It refers, on the one hand, to growth in holiness. A Christian is expected to grow every day ; not to stand still, marking time, but "so to live that each to-morrow finds him further than to-day." We are to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and

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to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity ; that so we may increase in the practical knowledge of Christ. This is character building : to be constantly growing more like Him. And to that end we have received the immediate presence and power of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier. He is not called the Holy Ghost because He is holier than either of the other persons of the Godhead, but because it is His official function to impart and cultivate holiness. Wherefore our sanctification is measured by our close and vital acquaintance with Him.

But sanctification means also consecration ; that is, devotion to duty. So Jesus says, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” ; by which He means that He sets before them an example of perfect devotion to duty. And He indicates how this is to be accomplished in us. The agent of sanctification, in both senses, is the Holy Spirit, and the instrument used by Him is “the truth.”

We are left in no doubt as to where this

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truth is to be found ; for Jesus adds, "Thy word is truth." His reference is clearly to the Scriptures. I am aware that an attempt is made by those who reject the Scriptures to explain this away by saying that He was thinking of all the manifestations of Deity in the world about us. But here the wish is father to the thought. The reference of Jesus is not to God's voice in the rolling of thunder and the rippling of brooks, but to His revealed word ; and this is in line with all His other teachings. He was always true to the Bible ; He knew it, believed it, loved it, preached it, practised it, and commended it to those who followed Him. He never in a single word or syllable intimated that He questioned its inspiration and entire trustworthiness. It is respectfully submitted to the consideration of His professed followers, that the Book which was good enough for Him should be good enough for us.

The pathway of sanctification is thus made clear. If we profess to follow Christ, we must allow Him to prescribe for us.

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He breathed on His disciples, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” He pointed to the Scriptures, saying, “Search them ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and those are they which testify of me.” We have the Bible ; and we have the Holy Spirit to illuminate its pages and anoint our eyes with eye-salve that we may see ; and we have, furthermore, the sustaining power of this great prayer of Jesus, “Sanctify them by thy truth.”

3. THAT THEY MIGHT BE UNIFIED.

“I pray for them ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”

It is a grave misinterpretation and perversion of this prayer to suggest that Jesus had in mind a heterogeneous union of all sorts of people, wherein Jews and Christians, Moslems, Confucianists, Buddhists and fire-worshippers meet together in a common fellowship under the apparent assumption that sincerity in error is as admirable as devotion to truth. The prayer of Jesus, on

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the contrary, was for the harmonious unity of all who sincerely believe in Him.

Nor did He pray that these might be one in an unconditioned oneness, but that they might be one after the similitude of the ineffable Trinity ; “as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us.” The union thus indicated is obviously not a matter of mere sentiment, nor to be accomplished with iron clamps. It is a union of life and purpose, a substantial union, a union for the accomplishment of a definite purpose in the salvation of men.

We sometimes lament the fact that there are different denominations of believers in Christ. But this is after the analogy of Nature. “Birds of a feather flock together”; and there are “many men of many minds.” We are made to segregate ; and it matters not how we differ in non-essentials so long as there is a substantial unity of life and purpose among us.

At the beginning of the Civil War in America there was a call for seventy-five thousand troops to serve for ninety days.

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The troops thus enlisted were organised into companies, regiments, divisions and army corps. There were infantry and cavalry and artillery. Had they been massed and hurled at once with a common purpose against the enemy the war might have been brought to a speedy close ; but they were stationed all over the country in scattered camps. Then came years of sporadic fighting : till at length Grant appeared with a conviction that the whole army must be brought together for one final blow. He meant to save the Union ; and there seemed no other way. The order went out accordingly, and a million men turned their faces toward a single point. All the lines converged at Appomattox. Grant was there with his formidable army ; Sheridan was hastening from the North and Sherman from the South. The result was a foregone conclusion when the lines closed in.

It was with a like purpose in mind that Jesus prayed for the unification of His Church, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The sending of Christ

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was for the saving of the world ; and the sending of His disciples was to the same end ; that is, to bring all men to the knowledge of the saving grace of God. "As the Father sent me into the world," He said, "so I have sent you." Never will the world believe in the great purpose of Jesus until all His disciples, moved by a common impulse, shall advance in solid phalanx to proclaim His gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

4. THAT THEY MIGHT BE GLORIFIED.

"Father, I will¹ that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou has given me." And here we reach the stupendous climax of this mighty sacerdotal prayer. The words of Jesus at this point are conclusive with respect to two matters. On the one hand, they prove that Jesus was either what He claimed to be, to wit, the only-

¹ The rendering of these words in the Revised Version, "Father, I desire," is not to my mind sufficiently strong. *Thelo* means more than "I desire." I cannot conceive how the Revisers could justify it.

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begotten and coequal Son of God, or else He was justly charged with blasphemy against God. For, observe, He does not ask this thing of the Father, but wills it! Out of His own authority, the *exousia* which was "from within," He wills it! As the Eternal Son, He wills it! Think of a mere man, though he were "the best of men," looking up to heaven and speaking in this way.

And observe also His reference to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." He claims not only to have been pre-existent, but to be a sempiternal sharer in the glory of God! He elsewhere announced His purpose of returning, after He should have finished His redemptive work, to reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was"!

But His words suggest another important truth, to wit, that His intercessory prayer on this occasion was but the beginning of an eternal intercession in behalf of those who follow Him. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." In that same interview with His disciples in the upper room

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He said, “I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” He is thus preparing us for a prepared place. He has entered upon His glory, and proposes that His faithful followers shall not only behold, but participate in it.

On one occasion His disciples caught a glimpse of that glory. It was on the Mount of Transfiguration, where “the fashion of his countenance was changed, and his raiment became white and dazzling.” For a moment His homespun fluttered aside and revealed the King ; but how, think you, will He appear when we shall see Him as He is ? Here is something to dream about. Surely a great surprise awaits us.

How natural it was, and how human, that Jesus should offer this prayer. The disciples had known Him in His humiliation ; He meant that they should also behold Him in His glory. They had seen Him clothed in homespun ; He wanted them to see Him arrayed in light, and dwelling in glory un-

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approachable. They had seen Him in the workshop, with chips and shavings about His feet and the implements of His trade on the bench before Him ; He wanted them to see Him in the palaces where He had dwelt before the world was. They had seen Him on His weary journeys followed by a humble retinue of fishermen ; He wanted them to see Him with legions of angels and archangels waiting to do His holy will. They had seen Him in the Judgment Hall, scourged and spit upon, wearing the cast-off purple of a petty magistrate, with an impotent reed in His hand ; He wanted them to see Him surrounded by a great multitude that no man can number, ascribing to Him, with a voice like the sound of many waters, honour, and glory, and power, and dominion for ever and ever. They had seen Him lifted up in the mortal anguish of the Cross ; He wanted them to see Him lifted up above all principalities and powers, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Nor was this merely His desire, but His imperative purpose. "I will," He said,

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“that they may be with me where I am ! ” There can be no thwarting His will. We shall, therefore, behold Him with these eyes.

One thing more, and here is a matter for serious consideration : this prayer of Jesus was only for those who love and follow Him. “I pray not for the world,” He said, “but for them which thou hast given me.”

On other occasions He did pray for the world. His advent was a demonstration of His love toward all the children of men. His life was a long prayer for sinners. His death was a mighty prayer for salvation to the uttermost. It had been written of Him, centuries before : “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” On the Cross, with His pierced hands outstretched, He offered that petition, “Give me the heathen for my inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession ! ” This was a plea for all humanity ; which in the fulness of time shall be answered, when the nations shall come

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flocking to Him as doves to their windows, and He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Oh yes, He prayed for the world. He prayed for all non-believers to the end of time when He cried, “Father, forgive them : for they know not what they do.” But on this occasion, in the upper room, His prayer was only in behalf of those who loved Him.

Oh, the blessedness of being included in the prayer of Christ ! It makes us strong and patient, and hopeful in suffering and service, to know that He thus ever liveth to make intercession for us.

“ Arise, my soul, arise :
Shake off thy gloomy fears :
The bleeding Sacrifice
In thy behalf appears ;
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands !

He ever lives above
For me to intercede ;
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead ;
His blood atones for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

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Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary ;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me.
‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry,
‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die ! ’

The Father hears Him pray,
His dear anointed One ;
He cannot turn away
The presence of His Son ;
The Spirit answers to the blood,
And tells me I am born of God ! ”

IX.

THE CLOSING HYMN.

(Matthew xxvi. 30.)

ON the night preceding the Passover the Jews were accustomed to sing the Great Hallel, “*O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: his mercy endureth for ever. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Bind the sacrifice with cords fast unto the horns of the altar. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: his mercy endureth for ever.*”

The disciples probably sang this hymn at the close of their service in the goodman’s

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house : and without doubt Jesus joined in singing it.

Why should He not sing ? Though He was passing under the dark shadow of the Cross, He foresaw the joyous outcome beyond it. His heart was in sympathy with all things pure and lovely and of good report. He was the happiest of men.

The town of Nazareth is overlooked by a precipitous hill, six hundred feet above the level of the sea. No doubt He had often, in His boyhood, climbed there to commune with God. The mountain flowers were about His feet ; and every one of them was like a swinging censer of praise. All about Him were orchards and vineyards and verdant pastures ; every grass-blade was inscribed with His Father's name. His heart gave thanks with the leaping of the brooks ; the birds sang, and He sang with them.

Why should He not sing ? His conscience was clear. He went to His rest at eventide with no confession of sin. There was no guile in His heart, no guile on His lips. For Him there were no vain regrets. He

The Closing Hymn

was now about to die ; yet he shrank not, murmured not. "Lo, I come," said He ; "in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will ! "

Why should not Jesus sing ? He knew the ultimate triumph of truth and goodness. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He watched the sun go down in golden glory. Red banners waved ; the spear-points of the heavenly host shone with golden splendour as they came forth marching to Armageddon, the consummation of all things. In the prophetic skies He heard the clash of arms, and the cry, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen !" and the rattle of chains as the great enemy fell headlong into the abyss ; then a rolling back of the mighty gates and the glad acclaim of welcome, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of Glory shall come in !" He thus saw the end from the beginning. He knew that His blood was destined to water the world's wildernesses until they should bloom like

In the Upper Room

gardens of roses. He knew that, whatever rebuffs and reverses might occur, truth and righteousness were sure to triumph after all.

And the disciples sang with Him. I seem to hear the voices of the two Sons of Thunder, deep and round, accustomed to shouting amid the turmoil of the stormy lake ; and the voice of Peter, hoarse and strident, but making a joyful noise unto the Lord ; and that of Thomas, timid and tremulous, as of one not quite sure of himself. While these and the others were singing, perhaps a watchman or some belated Jerusalemite paused under the window and wondered who could be making merry in this manner at dead of night.

Thus began the history of the singing Church. Tacitus says that the early Christians were wont to rise at daybreak and, in retired places, sing to the honour of Him whom they worshipped as God. The Church has come down through all the ages like a carolling bird with the dew of morning on its wings.

It is meet and proper that we should sing

The Closing Hymn

in the sanctuary. In Solomon's temple, when the sons of Asaph raised the tune, accompanied by the great orchestra of harps and cymbals, and followed by choirs shouting back from gallery to gallery in antiphonal service, the cloudy presence came forth from behind the fine-twined curtains and filled the sacred place. Thus when we worship in the great congregation the doors of the sanctuary move upon their hinges and He enters whose presence brings fulness of life and joy.

It is meet that we should sing in the discharge of duty. The carpenter does better work when he whistles at his bench. The Puritan girl in *The Minister's Wooing*, humming the old psalm tunes, might well make her lover "think of heaven and angels." The soldiers of France, at the foot of St. Bernard, tugged vainly at the great guns until the flutes struck up the Marseillaise. We lift our burdens the more easily, meet our sorrows the more resignedly, perform our tasks the more joyously, when God's praise is ringing in our hearts.

In the Upper Room

It is written of Bunyan's pilgrim that he went singing all the way from the City of Destruction to heaven's gate. He sang as he dragged himself out of the Slough of Despond, as he climbed the Hill of Difficulty, after his fight with Apollyon, past the entrance of the Giant's Cave, in the Pleasant Meadows, by the River of Life, when he escaped from Doubting Castle, as he journeyed through the Delectable Gardens of the land of Beulah, and so until he entered the Celestial City. Nor did his singing end there ; neither shall ours.

“Our songs of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life or thought or being last,
Or immortality endures.”

Could we see into heaven, our eyes dazzled by the effulgence of the glory which gathers about Him who sitteth upon the throne, we should hear the four-and-twenty elders lifting their voices in the Great Hallel ; and the circle of angels and archangels, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, swelling the anthem, “O give

The Closing Hymn

thanks unto the Lord ; for he is good : for his mercy endureth for ever and ever ” ; and the still greater multitude which no man can number of saints triumphant adding their voices to the general praise, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing for ever and ever ! ”

The meeting in the goodman’s house is over. At the Master’s word the disciples rise and follow Him down the outer stairway. Whither ? To Gethsemane, the Judgment Hall and Calvary. After that they will meet Him, with the glow of triumph on His face, at Olivet ; where, as He lifts His hands in blessing, the heavens will open to receive Him. Then whither ? To the glory which He had with the Father before the world was !

Presently one of those disciples will pass on by the red path of martyrdom to rejoin Him ; then another and another until none remains but the aged John, who is also

In the Upper Room

destined to “climb the steep ascent to heaven
'mid peril, toil and pain.” Thus the circle is
again complete. What a reunion?

“So part we sadly in the wilderness
To meet again in sweet Jerusalem.”

They assemble no more in the goodman's house, but in the Father's house of many mansions. Home, sweet home! What happy memories they recall; what vast campaigns they plan! For there “his servants do serve him.” The mists that clouded their path have cleared away. They see the just proportion of things, as once they could not. They know now—as we shall presently—that the earthly life is but the preface of an endless serial, time but the threshold of eternity, and service here a mere apprenticeship for unending usefulness in the kingdom of God.

APPENDIX

SOME ADDITIONAL READING

THE subject dealt with in the foregoing pages may be fitly described as “The Most Holy Place” of the Gospel. Viewed, as it must be, in relation to the institution of the Supper, it naturally appeals to the student or preacher who looks forward, season by season, to a due celebration of the feast. The literature on the subject is no doubt enormous, yet no one need experience the slightest difficulty in singling out the “helps” which he has found most serviceable in his own ministry.

One of these is unquestionably Godet’s *Commentary on St. John*: for, as Principal Edwards so justly remarks: “One of Godet’s excellences is clearness. . . . He is less penetrating than Calvin, less felicitous than Bengel, not so learned as Meyer, nor so bold as Hofmann; *but for spiritual insight*

Appendix

give us Godet." To preachers and teachers alike we still consider him one of the most helpful and suggestive of commentators.

And the same claim may be advanced for the sanity and lucidity of Bruce's *Training of the Twelve* — chapters xxi.—xxvi. These chapters are remarkably luminous and satisfying, and may well be included among the expository material connected with the Upper Room.

On the devotional aspects of the subject nothing could be more helpful than *Love Revealed*, by George Bowen of Bombay, or *The Spirit of Christ*, by Dr. Andrew Murray. These will help to produce the right kind of atmosphere for the study of so sacred a theme, and will always repay the most prayerful examination at each communion season.

Two other studies, of more than passing interest to the practical expositor, are worthy of being added to the present list. We refer to Stanley's account of the "Samaritan Pass-over" in *The Jewish Church* (vol. i. pp. 443—451), and David Baron's treatment of "The Conclusion of the Hallel" in *The Ancient*

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Scriptures and the Modern Jew (pp. 99–122). These help to infuse something of the historic sense, apart from which all devotional or even exegetical study is in large measure inadequate. Expository preaching is dependent on all the three. Historical imagination, spiritual intuition, and exegetical fidelity and skill are all needed for a due appreciation of the text.

In addition to the above, the following are strongly recommended : (1) *The Life and Writings of St. John*, by Dr. James M. Macdonald ; particularly chapters xii. and xiii. ; (2) *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, chapters xiii.–xvii., Dr. H. R. Reynolds and Dr. T. Croskey ; (3) Eight Sermons on the Upper Room by Dr. Alexander Maclaren, in a volume entitled *Last Sheaves* ; (4) Bishop Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John*, volume iii. ; (5) *Studies in the Gospels*, chapter on "The Vine and its Branches," by Archbishop Trench ; (6) a volume of *Addresses on John*, published by the St. John Conference Committee, Providence, R.I.,

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1906. Many of the papers in this last volume are invaluable to the preacher, particularly those by E. W. Blake, Dr. Samuel Hart, Rev. Rockwell Potter, Dr. A. W. Anthony, Dr. Henry C. Sheldon, Rev. Robert A. Ashworth, Dr. John D. Pickles, Dr. Henry D. Fowler, Dr. Henry S. Nash, Bishop Huntington of New York, and Dr. Horace W. Tilden.

J. A.

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