The Mendenhall Lectures, First Series
Delivered at DePauw University

THE BIBLE AND LIFE

BY
EDWIN HOLT HUGHES
Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church

THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

First Edition printed February, 1915
Reprinted June, 1915

TO
CHARLES RAISBECK MAGEE

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

[Pg 9]

By the courteous invitation of the President, Faculty, and Trustees of DePauw University, the writer had the privilege of delivering the first series of lectures under the foundation as endowed by his friend, the Rev. Marmaduke H. Mendenhall. The following comments are the only introductory words that need be given.

The terms of the lectures were kept strictly within the radius of real life. The author does not claim to be a biblical scholar in any technical sense. Nor did he deem that the primary need of the students whom he addressed would be met by a discussion of theories of inspiration or of dates and authorships. College students have a passion for reality, and the most convincing apologetic for them is the argument from actual living.

Under the instruction of the founder the lectures are to be placed in permanent form for the students of the University and for the wider public. The lecturer having been rewarded by the close attention of hundreds of youthful hearers, the writer will have a still greater reward if those who heard the words as spoken in Meharry Hall are joined by the larger company who will listen for the voice of the Spirit in these pages.

[Pg 10]

Edwin Holt Hughes.

THE MENDENHALL LECTURES

[Pg 11]

FOREWORD

The late Reverend Marmaduke H. Mendenhall, D.D., of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, donated to DePauw University the sum of ten thousand dollars, the purpose and conditions of which gift are set forth in his bequest as follows:

The object of this gift is “to found a perpetual lectureship on the evidences of the Divine Origin of Christianity, to be known as the Mendenhall Foundation. The income from this fund shall be used for the support of an Annual Lectureship, the design of which shall be the exhibition of the proofs, from all sources, of the Divine Origin, Inspiration, and Authority of the Holy Scriptures. The course of lectures shall be delivered annually before the University and the public without any charge for admission.

"The lecturers shall be chosen by an electing body consisting of the President of the University, the five senior members of the Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts, and the President of the Board of Trustees, subject to the approval of the Board of Bishops [Pg 12] of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The lecturers must be persons of high and wide repute, of broad and varied scholarship, who firmly adhere to the evangelical system of Christian faith. The selection of lecturers may be made from the world of Christian scholarship without regard to denominational divisions. Each course of lectures is to be published in book form by an eminent publishing house and sold at cost to the Faculty and students of the University."

GEORGE R. GROSE,
President of DePauw University.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE [Pg 13]

Inasmuch as future lecturers on the Mendenhall Foundation may not have had the privilege of personal acquaintance with the founder, it is doubtless good that this first volume may record the outlines of his life and character. Marmaduke H. Mendenhall was born at Guilford, North Carolina, May 13, 1836. He died at Union City, Indiana, October 9, 1905. He was the son of Himelius and Priscilla Mendenhall, who, when their son was about one year old, came northward and settled near Peru, Indiana. Doctor Mendenhall did not suggest in manner or bearing that he was Southern born. Had one chosen to judge of his birthplace by the man himself, one would have said that he was a typical son of New England. His deeper self was typified by his personal appearance. He was tall, stately, dignified, serious, earnest.

He joined the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1856. Those days were still pioneer, and he entered gladly into the sacrificial ministry of that [Pg 14] period. It is a singular coincidence that he was doubtless the first minister of his faith to begin work near Union City, where he closed his earthly labors. It was his privilege, also, to build the first Methodist Episcopal church in the city where he died. The history of his ministry shows that he served all classes of charges—country, city, village, county seat. Several times the record is dotted with the word "Mission," which would indicate that he frequently followed the apostolic fashion of building strictly on his own foundations. He came to a place of leadership in his own Conference. To the day of his death he was an influential factor in all its plans and programs. Though he had been technically "superannuated" for sixteen years prior to his death, his mind kept its full vigor, and his word kept its full weight. Twice he was elected a reserve delegate to the General Conference, while in 1880 he was chosen as one of the regular delegates.

From the beginning of his ministry Dr. Mendenhall showed the signs of a remarkable mind, and at the end of his ministry he was still manifesting a keen interest in current questions and in theological problems. His library to the last was freshened by the purchase of new books. When he turned his many volumes over to Gammon Theological Seminary that institution did not receive hundreds of antiquated volumes, [Pg 15] but rather a collection brought down to date and selected by a master judgment. The intellectual, though suffused at times by a proper and restrained emotion, was his

noticeable characteristic. He was given to thorough analysis. He was markedly painstaking. Records that he made of the conduct of his public services indicate that the final details were all regarded, and that hymns and Scripture lessons were chosen with a view to their bearing on the instruction of the day.

Being a vigorous personality, he held his views with strength. He was keenly loyal to his convictions, whether these related to methods of work or to statements of doctrine. In his advocacy or in his antagonism he was always frank and open. His opponent could see him standing out in plain view, with no effort to protect himself by secrecy. Men could never doubt his sincerity, however much they might question the correctness of his positions. He knew no sinuous paths. He was as direct as sunlight, and he traveled in straight lines.

In all his spheres of work Dr. Mendenhall made deep and lasting impressions. Highly intellectual as he was, he was still an excellent administrator. His business qualifications were signal. Every matter committed to him was cared for with [Pg 16] scrupulous nicety. He left no loose ends to any of his work. Although his salaries were never large, as salaries are counted to-day, he secured a comfortable property, and this in spite of the fact that throughout his lifetime he was a generous contributor to good causes.

He served as a trustee of De Pauw University longer than other member of his Conference had served, up to the time of his death. From 1878 to 1887 he served in this capacity, while in 1896 he was reelected and was an active worker on the board up to the end of his life. He aided in pushing the institution through its crisis. The files of this writer disclose a careful and helpful correspondence upon matters vital to the welfare of the University. In the sessions of the board he was always urbane and conciliatory. He crowned the work of his life by leaving to the University all of his estate. Upon the increase of the estate to a certain figure, the income was to be used in founding a lectureship on Revealed Religion, especially as related to the Holy Bible.

Although the writer was an intimate friend of Dr. Mendenhall, he cannot remember any statements made to him which would indicate the founder's views of inspiration or of [Pg 17] the other questions that have made the biblical problem of the last two decades. But his library showed that he was fully aware of the modern discussions. Perhaps he felt that a lectureship, broadly founded and practically directed, would be of special service to the church in a time of transition. The writer entertains the conviction that, even though Dr. Mendenhall might not agree fully with all that is found in the following pages, he would still appreciate the effort to bring the Bible within its divine purpose as a Book of Life.

The home of the founder revealed him as a model of courtesy and kindliness. Friends who saw him by his own fireside noted the benignity that matched his dignity, the tenderness that equaled his seriousness. Those who came into the nearer circle of his life regarded him most highly. To the wife who survives him he was in all ways a helper, gentle in demeanor and loyally careful in the administration of her interests. As the writer reviews the drift of these first lectures delivered under this foundation, he is persuaded that the founder's relation to Himself, to his Home, to his Work, to his Wealth, to his Pleasure and Sorrow, and particularly to the cause of Education, is not misrepresented herein. The Bible was his Book, and its ideals were achieved in his [Pg 18] living. It is the sincere wish that these pages may accomplish somewhat the main purpose of the founder's heart in making the divine Book a brighter lamp for the guidance of youth.

THE HUMAN OUTLINE

[Pg 19]

It may be well to give in human form the outline which will be followed in these pages. The story is the story of millions of men on as many days.

A man awoke one morning to the consciousness of himself. Looking about he saw the familiar sights of his own home, and soon he heard the voices of his wife and children. Ere long the little people were on their way to school. The man proceeded to his work, while his wife took up her domestic duties. He returned in the evening with the proceeds of his day's labor added to his stock of goods. He partook of the evening meal and then indulged in the pleasure of "the children's hour." He later called upon a friend who had met with sorrow and in the trouble of his friend he found a fresh reminder of his own affliction. He retired in due season to his slumber and went forth the next morning to make the like round of the day.

This is a piece of constant biography. It could be duplicated by reference to many a personal journal and diary. If we analyze the description, we shall find that the man was driven to take a relation to Himself, to Home, to Education, to Work, to Wealth, to Pleasure and Sorrow.

[Pg 20]

The aim of this book is to state somewhat the bearing that the Bible has upon these great departments of our human living. The apologetic tests the Book under the terms of this human outline.

CHAPTER I

[Pg 21]

The Bible and Life

The Bible is a book of power. The man who would deny this statement would impugn his own intelligence. It is to-day the Book of the strongest nations. If the strongest nations selected it for their inspiration and guidance, that fact is significant. If, on the other hand, the Bible has trained the strongest nations, that fact is more significant. In either case power is lodged in the Holy Scriptures. The miracle is this: That a very ancient Book rules a very modern world.

Various explanations are given. Some men say that the Bible is powerful because it has been promoted by a powerful organization. But this explanation needs explaining. How did the Bible secure the aid of this organization? Why did not the organization take the Dialogues of Plato and become the evangel of Socrates' splendid wisdom? Why did it elect one particular volume? And what would have been the effect on its own life if it had chosen some other book? Would the writings of Marcus Aurelius or of Seneca, with their high moral grade and their marked religious insight, have served the holy purpose as effectively? When we attempt to substitute some other book in the Bible's

[Pg 22]

place, our hesitancy quickly passes on to positive refusal. The Christian Church, with any other volume as its textbook, is simply inconceivable.

Other men will say that the power of the Bible has come from its girding by a doctrine of authority. This explanation must likewise be explained. Could a Book without inherent authority be long maintained among intelligent peoples on the basis of artificial authority? Why is the Bible the best seller and the greatest worker in those lands where it has been set free to yield its own message? What is the peculiar quality in the Book that has saved any theory of its authority from appearing absurd? The Bible showed its power long before men adopted any theory of its power. Doubtless the claim of authority has increased the influence of the Book over certain types of minds. Still it may be confidently asserted that the claim of authority has depended far more on the power of the Bible than the power of the Bible has depended on the claim of authority. The effect should not be allowed to pass itself off as the main cause.

Nor does the power of the Bible depend upon mere bulk. Shakespeare wrote enough to [Pg 23]
make several Bibles. So did Scott. So did Dickens. So did Parkman. If the Bible is a moral and spiritual Encyclopedia, its material has been strangely condensed. It is a brief Book, yet out of its small compass men gather texts for fifty years of preaching and at the close of their life's task feel that the pages are still exhaustless. The Bible has inspired literature far beyond its own bulk. It is a small library of books gathered from many authors, but it has filled great libraries with commentaries and sermons and discussions. Its brevities have provoked measureless pages of writing. The world is big, yet it is measurably ruled by a small Book.

It would seem likewise that a Book written so long ago would fail of the element of timeliness. That an old volume should keep its place in a new century is in itself an anomaly. The last of the Bible was penned hundreds of years since. Accepting the most radical views as to dates, its youngest book was produced quite more than a millennium and a half ago. Meanwhile the world has been making amazing progress. We boast of our achievements in transportation and communication. All ancient things seem to be outgrown, save only the Bible. The books that were written as contemporaries of parts of the great Book have either slipped into oblivion or are known to-day only by the [Pg 24]
intellectually elect. The classics are studied by a small circle of scholars. The average man knows nothing of Virgil, or Cicero, or Homer, by any direct contact with the works of those authors. But the Bible, which is out of date by the calendar, is not out of date by its own meaning. It is singularly contemporaneous. Its different portions were called forth by passing events and the Book itself is clearly touched by its own times. For all that, eternity appears to have lodged itself in its contemporaneousness. The twentieth century, eager and thrilling as it is, accepts a Guide Book from the distant years. Roman Law and Greek Art are filtered to the new age through modern channels. The Bible itself comes to us more simple and more powerful than any modern interpretations of its messages. There is a sense in which it declines to apply to itself its own figure of speech about the new wine in the old bottles.

The Bible defies geographical distance as well as calendar distance. For the most part its record relates to what happened in a small and remote section of the earth. It reaches its climax in an obscure province which was smaller than many a modern county. The customs of which it tells are mostly gone. Sandals and tents and camels and parchments are curiosities in the new lands and new times. Much of the setting of biblical events is [Pg 25]
wholly unknown to our day, and so must be reproduced for our children in pictures and for our adults in descriptions. An Oriental Book is the chief literature of an Occidental world.

In spite of its small size, its great age, its cramped geography, its vivid Orientalism, the Bible keeps its mastery. What is the explanation?

It must be that the Bible appeals to something fundamental in life itself. The final test of inspiration must, of course, be found in what the Bible does for life. A book that is not inspiring cannot be proved to be inspired. It cannot give what it does not have and it must surely have received what it gives. It would be a mistake, however, to confuse formal truthfulness with inspiring vitality. The description of a street scene, dealing with the passing relations of pedestrians, wagons, trees, birds, houses; the lengths and widths of sidewalks and streets; the figures of population; the social status of the various groups—all this may be told with exact and mathematical truthfulness. It may be correct and still not be inspired or inspiring. On the other hand, the parable of the prodigal son is a story which in its precise detail may represent something that never occurred. But it has impressed the world as both inspired and inspiring. Its words haunt [Pg 26] and pierce and coax and subdue men. This indicates that a story given for a spiritual purpose shows more essential truthfulness than does a description given for formal exactness. The reason is that the parable appeals to something fundamental in life itself. The son and the father are ever with us. God and his children are the everlasting facts. The story is more true than is the description. This contrast represents the biblical trend. The Book penetrates through the husk to the kernel, through superficial facts to deepest truths, through passing events to eternal meanings. It is the Book of Life.

What gives the Bible this appeal? Whence did it secure its vital quality? The only reply is that the appeal to life must be born of life itself. Sometimes a bizarre explanation is given of the source of a religious volume, the assumption being that a human origin denies a divine origin. The more men have to do with its production, the less may we presume that God has touched the work. A curious illustration of this viewpoint is found in the claim for the Book of Mormon. The story is as follows: A heavenly visitant appeared to Joseph Smith and told him that in a certain place he would find the miracle book. Smith obeyed the directions and found in the place named a box of stone. [Pg 27] In this box was a volume half a foot in thickness. It was written on thin plates of gold, and these plates were bound together by gold rings. The writing was in a strange language, but with the book was found a pair of miraculous eyeglasses which conferred the ability to read the pages. In other words the Book of Mormon was not born of human life under the guidance of the divine life. It was the product of a straight miracle, and the power to decipher its meaning came only by miracle. Such a theory of the origin is easy to understand, even though it may be difficult to believe. It represents the extreme form of that faith which minimizes the partnership of man with God in the making of all genuine gospels of life.

The incarnation was Man and God together. The church is being fashioned by man and God together; the Spirit and the Bride are colleagues. Worship is possible only when man and God are together in fellowship. If the Bible came by any method other than the coworking of man and God, its production would stand for a departure from the usual divine method. The power of the Bible, however, grows out of the fact that it is not an abnormal book, fantastically given to men. There is a humorous story of an old woman who was discovered in diligent study of the Hebrew alphabet. Asked why at [Pg 28] her age she was beginning to learn so difficult a tongue, she made reply that when she died she desired to address the Almighty in his own language! There have been theories of the Bible that are scarcely caricatured by this tale. If there have been doctrines of the Book that made it the product of a lonely man, there have likewise been doctrines that made it the product of a lonely God. Neither doctrine is correct. The Bible grew out of human life that had been touched and glorified by the divine presence and power. Because it grew out of life it makes its appeal to its native element in life itself. It simply claims its own.

A review of the different parts of the Bible will show how true this statement is. Practically every book is localized and personalized. Something that happened among

men called forth the writing. The names of the books in the Pentateuch show this fact. Genesis treats of the origins of the earth and of man, and is an answer to the inevitable question that springs in the human mind. Exodus treats of the going forth of the Hebrew people from their Egyptian bondage. Leviticus is a description and discussion of the Levitical rules. Deuteronomy is a second giving of the Law and an enlargement of its sphere as well as an enforcement of its precepts. The Ten Commandments make a [Pg 29] human document because their sole aim is to ennoble and protect human life.

It is so with the historical books. They are the records of actual human living. Their pages are sprinkled with the names of real men and women. Joshua, the Judges, Ruth, Samuel, the Kings are all there, eager participants in earth's affairs under the sense of God. These books are not theoretical dissertations on life by a dreamer in his closet; they are rather the general descriptions of life itself as it moved along a period of seven or eight centuries. They give us the salient and meaningful happenings among God's chosen people. They tell the story of a crude race as it is being led forward to the heights. The pages record limitations and faults simply because they tell us of actual life. The sins of the Bible's premier heroes are written down with entire frankness. The human touch is everywhere. We shall not read the historical books long ere we find that they, too, are human documents. But these human documents, covered with the names of men and women, are likewise covered with the ever-recurring name of Jehovah. In the record one discovers man and God.

In the prophetical books the like fact is apparent. The prophets were men of flesh and [Pg 30] blood. They rushed into the prophetic work from the ordinary occupations of ancient life. From the fields they came, and from the vineyards. Perhaps one came from a royal palace. Surely not more than one of them came from the altar of the priesthood. They were men who knew the shame and glory of contemporary life. They did not hesitate to touch the politics of their day. They decried kings. They denounced landlords. They made frontal attacks on all forms of wickedness. Their appeal was for reality. They declared that God hated all pretense. New moons and feasts and fasts that did not grow out of devout hearts they declared to be an insult and an abomination before a righteous God. They talked from life to life. They came in response to some human demand in their times. They were not theorists, discussing academic problems of conduct. They were blazing moral realists. We do not need to detail the list of those forthtellers of the Word of God. Even the book of Jonah is full of life. Parable, allegory, history—its descriptions are based in life and its appeal is to life. In its moral lesson for the individual, and in its missionary lesson for a narrow race, it offers enough duty to keep life busy for a million years. If men would heed its lessons for life and cease their petty [Pg 31] debates about the anatomy of whales, the Book would meet them with vital urgings. The one point now is that the prophetical writings grew out of life. They did not come encased in stone boxes, written on gold leaves, to be read and understood only by miraculous spectacles. They came from real living, and they claim their own wherever real men are living to-day.

We need not follow the same idea into the later books of the Old Testament. The Proverbs were gathered from the streets of life. Ecclesiastes is the pronouncement of life vainly satiated. Even the Psalms, classed as devotional books, were usually evoked by some actual happening. The king goes out to war; a psalm is penned. The ark is moved from one place to another; a psalm is written. A man is jaded and discouraged; a psalm is written to recover him to a consciousness of the care of Jehovah. A monarch falls into grievous sin; a psalm is written to express his penitence. A study of any Commentary on the Psalms will show us that nearly all of these devotional utterances were prompted by some human experiences. They are the shoutings and sobbings of living men. The book of Psalms is not the liturgy of academicians. Its processionals and its recessionals show actual men and women in the real march of life.

In the New Testament this same law of life rules. Jesus comes before the Gospels. [Pg 32]
Without the Life there could not have been the record of the Life. In any worthy Bible life must always come first. This phase will be treated later. Now it must be emphasized that the entire New Testament sprang from a Life that was lived among men. The Word must become flesh before it could become literary record. Grace and truth walked the earth ere they were traced on pages. Here again the Bible comes from life in order that it may return to life again.

The statement concerning the New Testament will admit of more detail. The Gospels grew immediately out of the disciples' life with the Lord. The Acts grew out of the life of the disciples in their daily contact with that ancient world. The Epistles all came from some urgency of life. While there were minor reasons for writing each of them there was still a main purpose that dictated the writing in every case. The Epistles to the Thessalonians seek to produce a right attitude toward the doctrine of the Lord's return. The Epistle to the Romans is a discussion of the doctrine of justification by faith and the relations of that doctrine to Judaism. That to the Galatians is both a personal defense of Paul's questioned apostleship and a declaration of freedom from bondage to [Pg 33]
the law. The Philippians grew out of an experience of human kindness, being an expression of gratitude for help in trouble and sympathy in sorrow. The Ephesians is a composite of moods—the victories of grace, the hope of the heavenlies, the expectation of ascension with the glorified Christ, the nature and aim of the true church. Colossians expresses the universal Lordship of Christ and tears down every theory that denies the reality of the incarnation and the utter preeminence of Jesus.

Even those Epistles that are personal in their character deal with universal life. Philemon reappeared in the contests concerning slavery both in England and America and scattered the arguments of Christian democracy. The bondage of men could not well live with the tender brotherhood that breathes in the letter which Onesimus carried back with him to his former master. Titus and Timothy are the pastoral advices sent by the aged apostle to his younger sons in the faith, while one of the Epistles is the hopeful farewell to earth and a glad trust toward the Eternal City. Revelation may be filled with strange imagery and may be shaken by the tremors of a perilous age; but men who know real life will say that the Beast and the Lamb are not merely wild figures of speech. The writer of the Apocalypse knew the world, and he knew the churches in its [Pg 34]
various cities.

Thus it seems literally true that all the New Testament was penned for the aid of life. When life went wrong, warning came. When life went aright, encouragement came. When life was mistaken, correction came. Whether the need was for doctrine, for reproof, or for instruction in righteousness, God met the need by the message that he gave to his servants. The Book is not a series of infallible abstractions; it is rather a vital Guide Book won from the experience of life's ways. The Bible is not a ready-made product dropped down from heaven; it is rather a Library made by men in many ages in partnership with the God who lives with men in all ages. In the best and truest fashion it makes record of the life of God in the souls of responsive men. Because it came from life it inevitably seeks life. It was born of God among men. Therefore, it lives among men with God.

We may carry the relation of life to the Bible quite beyond this point. The Bible not only grew from life, but it came back to life for its testing. Even as there have been theories of the making of the Book that ignored the element of human living, so have there been theories of the canon of Scripture that ignored the element of human testing. Years ago a renowned teacher said to his pupils, "Never go deliberately to work to [Pg 35]
make a book. The only volumes worth while are those that grow out of your deepest life." The advice was good. In a way it suggests the manner of the Bible's making.

There is no evidence whatsoever that any writer of its pages ever thought that his work would become part of a Bible. No man ever said, "I will now write a book of the Holy Scripture." Nor did any group of men assign departments to each other, saying, "We will prepare a divine Book." The Bible came in no such mechanical way. Written because of life's needs, as seen in the light of God, it was tested and collected by life's needs, as seen in that same light. It was once strikingly said that the words of Jesus were vascular; if you cut them they would bleed. One shrinks from the metaphor. Yet it presents a truth about the whole Bible. A Book written by life and selected by life has naturally a message for life.

How did the books of the Bible secure their place in the canon? The romancer offers his tradition here again. We find a very fantastic legend coming down from medieval times to this effect: In the church at Nicæa one day a great mass of religious writing lay in an indiscriminate heap beneath the altar. A miracle gave an answer to the question as [Pg 36] to what books should secure permanent places in the Holy Book. The First Ecumenical Conference was in session. The year was 325 A. D. While man wondered and questioned, God settled the issue. Suddenly the genuine books were lifted from the mass of volumes and, without visible power, lay on the sacred table. The writings miraculously declared uncanonical remained beneath the altar. This theory of selection corresponds to the theory of dictation. We have in both cases an active God and a passive man. While it would be unfair to say that this medieval legend has any modern following, it is true that certain theories of the selection of the canon resemble it in that they discount the human factor. Even as God and men worked together in the writing of the books, so God and men worked together in the binding of the books into their volume of fellowship. Life that confessed God and tried to do his will chose the books and decreed that they should dwell in unity.

As there has been a tendency to overstate the miracle feature in the selection of the canon, so has there been a tendency to overstate the part played by the authoritative councils of the church. The assumption has been that arbitrariness was the chief feature of the whole process. Certain men met in conference, debated the merits of the several [Pg 37] books, and finally settled by vote what particular writings should have their place in the Bible of the church. Now while something of this kind did occur, it is far from the truth to affirm that the councils lacked a representative capacity. The vote may have been recorded by theologians, but the vote had previously been determined by the Christian democracy. Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. His predecessors were the people. In a dignified sense Lincoln was their clerk, expressing their will after many years of agitation. The wisdom of the Great Commoner was shown not only by the personal conviction that he put into the document, but also by his keen appreciation of the will of the multitude. Though the parchment of liberty was proclaimed by one man, it is a fact that it was dictated by many men. Something parallel to this occurred in the selection of the material of the Bible. Councils played their part; their part, however, was the part of agents.

This was true of the Old Testament. Many persons may still have the vision of Jewish officials with long robes and sober faces deciding the ancient canon. Indeed, there was for long a tradition that Ezra founded a kind of Imperial Synagogue which continued for not less than two hundred years and which in that period finished the collection and [Pg 38] authorization of the Old Testament. This synagogue had various presidents, including Nehemiah. No such organization for the selection of the Scriptures existed. Accurate ancient history gives no trace of its work. The work of testing the writings was slow. The arbiter was life. Life had determined the writing. Life must now determine the authority.

We can catch an interesting glimpse into this process by studying for a moment the story about Josiah, the young king. Hilkiah, the priest, finds the book of the law. Shaphan carries the book to the king and reads to him from the ancient lore. The book quickens the royal conscience. God and the earthly ancestors of Josiah speak to him from the pages. He is made to feel how far he and his people have gone from the will of Jehovah. He rends his clothes. He sends for the human voices of the Most High. Huldah, the prophetess, is the chief instructor. The people are called back to their allegiance. The land is purged. A manuscript has done all this. It inspired the king and his people until abominations fled from Israel. The land continued in obedience until the archers sent King Josiah to his sepulcher. That portion of the law that had been read to the king by Shaphan and had then been delivered to the people proved its inspiring quality in its effects on life. On that day a portion of the Old Testament canon was selected. [Pg 39]

Doubtless this incident is somewhat typical of a procedure that was more or less constant. The imperial synagogue was the Jewish people. The debate that settled issues was the debate of experience. Life was electing its own books. Words that touched the conscience into an impression of God and then worked their way outward to the blessing of the multitude were gaining for themselves the popular vote. Candidates for the canon were rejected. Other candidates were held in long suspicion. Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Esther, Solomon's Song—all these served a long probation ere they proved themselves worthy of their place. The ancient world, like the modern world, was not willing to surrender Proverbs, with their homely wisdom; Esther, with its lesson of loyalty to race and kindred; Solomon's Song, with its refusal to listen to the blandishments of royal lasciviousness luring to the betrayal of a true and humble lover; or even Ecclesiastes, with its pessimism uncured until the writer once more finds God.

After books secured their place in the authorized list of the Jews, they had still to contest to keep their place. As late as the first century of the Christian era, debate was frequent. Life was slow to render its decision. There was no hasty authority. The final judgment was rendered by the experience of a race. When Eck reminded Martin Luther that the church had decided what books should go into the canon and that Luther must accept a quotation from Second Maccabees as authoritative, the great Reformer made reply, "The church cannot give more authority or force to a book than it has in itself. A council cannot make that be Scripture which in its own nature is not Scripture." So it came to pass that in due season the freed religious consciousness of the church took certain apocryphal books from the Old Testament canon. That consciousness seemed to feel a difference in spiritual power between the Apocrypha and the other portions of the Old Testament. Life was still coming to the polls in order that it, far more than any stately council, should elect the true Word of God. [Pg 40]

This same process of selection went on in relation to the New Testament. The early Christians started with no New Testament whatsoever. Their Bible was the Old Testament. We do not find any warrant for saying that they expected to make additions to the Bible. Jesus came first. Then the Gospels and Epistles came as natural consequences. The early Christians, as we shall later see, had received the very purpose and climax of Revelation, because they had received Christ. But the Gospels and Epistles which grew up out of life had in their turn to be tested by life. Believers began by reading these as if they were suggestive; after the writings had wrought their full impression upon the minds of the believers, they began to consider them inspired and holy. This decision did not come abstractly, nor did it come quickly. Gradually the sense of the value of certain writings grew upon the early church. Almost two centuries of the Christian era passed ere the collection so commended itself to believing hearts as to be given definite form. As in the case of the Old Testament, so in the case of the New, life declined to be hurried into a decision. The books must prove their authority in [Pg 41]

the experience of the people. The Christian republic was engaged in the task of choosing its Bible from life.

We find, too, that certain books appeared as claimants for permanent authority that did not win their case. The ancient manuscripts were passed from church to church and were read to the people. The task of sifting went surely forward. Directly lists of books that peculiarly commended themselves to the Christians began to appear. In the first two centuries such leaders as Irenæus, Clement, and Tertullian present their lists which [Pg 42] show some of our present books omitted, some other books included, and still other books declared as good but inferior. The Christian consciousness had not yet reached a confident verdict. But a review of the period shows the Christian leaders verging toward unanimity. Slowly some books were eliminated; and slowly other books asserted their right to be included. By the beginning of the fifth century the canon had been practically determined. The great Augustine, with his immediate predecessors and his close successors, reveals the well-nigh unanimous conclusion to which the church had come. It may well be noted that the voting booth stood open for almost four hundred years. The Councils of Hippo and Carthage were simply the servants of the people. The books that had sprung from life had received the testing of life.

It must be allowed that here, as in the case of the Old Testament canon, some books had to re-prove their right to the place of authority. The Council of Trent may have settled the matter for all Roman Catholics, but it did not irretrievably close the canon for Protestants. It is well known that Luther himself wished to remove several books from the list, and that he called the Epistle of James "strawlike." Luther's reason was a [Pg 43] polemical one. He felt that the vivid practicalness of James conflicted with the principle of justification by faith alone. It is only a stronger evidence of the demands of life in the selection of the final canon that even the powerful influence of Luther could not prevail. The church well knew that the Epistle of James would be a good antidote for any lazy mysticism. Life voted against Luther in this instance, and life won. Zwingli wanted to exclude the Book of Revelation from the canon. The Christian republic felt that beneath all the weird imagery of the Apocalypse God was speaking by his servant to the churches of all time. Life voted against Zwingli in this instance, and life won. When life was given its freedom the most influential voices of authority could not prevail against its verdicts. This completes the circle. The Bible was written by life, and the Bible was selected by life.

Perhaps it is well to note that when any portion of the Scripture has been taken away from the purpose of life, it has lost its note of authority; when it has been brought back to that purpose of life, it has regained that note. The Song of Solomon illustrates this point. It had slight hold on the life of the world as long as it was used as a complex [Pg 44] allegory or symbol relating to Christ and the church. All labored attempts to so construe the book did the book itself injury. But when the Song was permitted to recover its own relation to life, it recovered its own power. The lesson of the book, rightly used, may save many young women from selling themselves to lascivious luxury and may give them strength against tempting allurements away from loyal love. However old the world may become, it will always need that lesson. In some way the Song came from life; and when it is tested by life, it regains its relation to life. Released from the strain of an allegorical interpretation, it proves itself a servant of one of life's holiest causes.

We come now to the primary consideration. The Bible grew from life. The Bible was tested by life. The Bible climaxes in Life. Jesus said that the Scriptures testified of him. It is even so. In the Sargent pictures in the Boston Public Library the prophets are represented as pointing forward to him. We may even more surely represent the writers of the Gospels and Epistles as pointing backward to him. The Bible is to be judged by

its goal; and the goal is Christ. Other sacred books, such as the Koran, were written by one person; the Bible was written by many persons for one Person. Jesus himself insisted on this. He claimed to surpass the old revelations. With all his reverence for the [Pg 45]
Old Testament, he still put himself above it by words like these: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of olden time, But *I* say unto you." This is as much as to affirm that he was the end of a progressive revelation. A skeptic once said that the whole Bible turns upon Jesus. The skeptic was right. One of the Gospels gives a word that may safely be applied to the whole trend of the Bible, "These things are written, that ye might believe that Christ is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." The very purpose is declared to be that men may be brought to faith in Christ.

It would be too much to say that all revelation ceased with the closing of the canon. Lowell's claim that the Bible of the race is written slowly, that each race adds its texts of hope and despair, of joy and moan, and that the prophets still sit at the feet of God, cannot be denied. But we may confidently assert that revelation came to its culmination and crown in Jesus Christ. When once the essential things concerning him had found place in a Book, the Bible found its consummation. Thus do we see that the books that were written by life, and then were tested by life, came to their climax in Life. The only [Pg 46]
way to secure a book better than the Bible is to secure a person better than Jesus. The best men entertain no such vain expectation because they know that nothing can be more perfect than Perfection.

We have set forth these three main reasons for the unique influence that the Bible exercises over life. Some are fond of saying that the Bible is merely one of many sacred books. Those who have read the bibles of other races will not be misled by the statement. Max Müller writes that the Sacred Books of the East "by the side of much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent." Of the Brahmanas he affirms that they "deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the ravings of madmen." The Koran sets forth a very fine morality, but it was written by one man and really presents a legal religion. Moreover it offers no perfect example. The author of the Koran himself claimed to receive revelations that opened a path to immorality. One voice declared the authority of the book, and an obedient people accepted this verdict. The Koran was not written by a wide range of life, expressing God's dealing with many persons under diverse conditions. It was not tested [Pg 47]
for its authority by the free conscience of a people. Mohammed wrote and adopted his own canon. The Christian's Bible, written by life, tested by life, and culminating in Life, has come back to life with transforming power.

The insistence of these chapters is that, when the Holy Scriptures are given a free opportunity to do their work with life, they prove their own inspiration. After all, there can be no other proof. The Bible is what it is, no matter what theory men may adopt as to its formation. It creates its own evidences. The argument for its inspiration is the life that it inspires. If the Book gives power and purity to all departments of life, the Book defends itself against attack and makes its own conquests. Does the Bible rightly exalt man? Does it sanctify the home? Does it promote education? Does it glorify work? Does it save wealth from greed, pleasure from excess, sorrow from despair? These questions reach the center of the problem.

We can go but one step beyond them, and that step is most significant. Do we find in the Bible not only a way to be followed, and a goal of truth to be gained, but a Life that will help lives along the way toward the goal? Does the Book really reveal the way, the truth, and the life? The answer must again be found in life. The evidences of dynamic [Pg 48]
are in the realms of human experience. More and more the students of the Holy

Scriptures, who seek the pages with a religious purpose, will find that all the departments of human living wait on Jesus for their meaning and come to him for their power. He is the Saviour. He lifts men out of their sins, up into a trembling and glorious idealism, and still up into a passion for efficient goodness. The supreme apology for the Bible will ever be found in men who have been so instructed, reproved, and corrected, that they may be named as perfect men of God, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Given its full right, the Book that was born of life, tried of life, glorified of Life, will find its own best witnesses in redeemed lives.

CHAPTER II

[Pg 49]

The Bible and Man

The natural outline of a human life which has suggested the method of these lectures represents a man as awaking each morning to the consciousness of himself. Every man lives perforce in his own company. He walks with himself on every road of life. He sits with himself in its resting places. He lies down with himself in its slumbers. He is his own friend, and his own enemy. Omar Khayyám declares that he is his own heaven and his own hell. There is a story of a farmer who said that when he climbed to the roof of his barn and looked about, he always found that he himself was the center of the world. The roof of the sky at all points was equally distant from him; the walls of the world made by the dipping horizon showed the same length of radius from himself! The story has its serious, as well as its amusing side. Every man is the personal center of a world which gets its meaning from his own heart. It is no wonder that the old Greek motto was "Know thyself."

[Pg 50]

Yet the knowledge of self is not easy knowledge. The fact that no man has ever seen his own face, save by reflection in some mirror, is a parable. The very eyes that see cannot see themselves. They are so near that they are hidden. The moral literature of the race always emphasizes the difficulty of self-revelation. Its cry is, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." It has a yet deeper desire: that it may know more of its own essential nature. Each man longs for a revelation of God; and each man longs for a revelation of himself. The present emphasis is that the Bible is the medium of this human revelation.

We do not go far in the reading of its pages without discovering that the word "thou" looms large in its spiritual grammar. Those curious persons who often bring their arithmetic to the Bible could doubtless tell how many times "thou" and "thee" and "thy" and "thine" are found in its chapters. In the Ten Commandments and in the New Commandment "thou" is the recurring word. Personal address is prominent everywhere. Indeed, the whole Book is a kind of prophet coming into the court of each soul and saying, "Thou art the man." Sometimes the approach is an accusation, sometimes an approbation; in any case the note is intensely individual. In the New Commandment the "self" is made the standard by which the relation to the neighbor is to be tested. The implication would seem to be that the man who does not love himself lacks the law by which his love for other men may be made efficient. Polonius was not far from the biblical idea when he said:

[Pg 51]

To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

In daily parlance it is often said. “Put yourself in his place”: but the value of that transfer of self is small if you do not know what the self is after you give it the new place! The revelation of self is likewise the revelation of other men. We know our neighbors only as we know ourselves.

Presuming, therefore, that we send a man to the Scriptures to find the doctrine of his own nature, what will be his discovery? The question is not a new one, and its answer has sometimes been touched by prejudice. Many have contended that in its effort to magnify God, the Bible is guilty of belittling man. Fragments of Scripture might be presented to support this criticism. We must, however, insist that the biblical teaching is to be determined by its main current rather than by its eddies. The Book does present God as high and lifted up, while man lies with his lips in the dust. It does make God a [Pg 52] King, while it proclaims man a subject. It does stress divine sovereignty, while insisting on human obedience and reverence. It does call for humility on the part of man. We may well admit that it is possible to overdo the call to humility. That good mood may easily pass over into a false mood. Occasionally men, in an effort to be humble, speak untruth concerning their own souls. It is just here that the “worm-of-the-dust” theory gets its chance. That phrase was a biblical one, used by a character in his moment of self-abasement. Yet the Concordance will prove that this lowly estimate of man is by no means the staple of teaching, as well as that much of the cheap preaching of human nature is a radical departure from the doctrine of the Book. It is always good to keep clear the distinction between vanity and self-respect, so that if a man may not have the right to look down on his neighbors he may still have the right to look up to himself. Humility must ever be based on truth, and self-respect can have no other foundation. The two moods are not contradictory. The one comes from the recognition of the nature of God, in the utter and unspeakable perfection of his attributes; the other comes from the recognition of the nature of man as being himself a partaker of that divine nature. In [Pg 53] reality the two moods grow out of the same truth.

A still deeper objection is sometimes offered against the scriptural theory of human nature. It is charged that the doctrine of the Fall, together with the constant emphasis of man’s “exceeding sinfulness,” deprives man of special dignity. Without doubt the theory of the Fall has sometimes been presented in such a manner as to cancel all human claims to greatness. Whenever a religious teacher carries his doctrine of the Fall to unjust lengths, we must all be tempted to declare that we can readily prove an alibi! And if he shall employ that doctrine as a vast slur on humanity, we shall insist that the length of the fall must be the length of the possible rise! In harmony with this idea a great preacher has given the world a sermon on “The Dignity of Humanity as Evidenced by its Ruins.” Much of the glory of the Coliseum at Rome has departed, but even its ruins are a testimony to its greatness. Seeing its gaunt grandeur in the sunlight, or viewing its impressive shadows in the moonlight, the tourist gets the shock of its glory. The simple truth is that a doctrine of the Fall is possible only when you start with human greatness. God made one creature strong enough to resist Himself—one [Pg 54] creature with sufficient self-determination to make mutiny in the world. We would not torture the doctrine of the Fall into a mere compliment for humanity; but we would insist that the possibility of a Fall implies a height to fall from, and that responsibility for a Fall implies a nature great enough and free enough to make far-reaching choices. The evidence of the dignity is still found among the ruins.

We must always supplement any doctrine of the Fall with a doctrine of human responsibility. The Bible is most explicit in this insistence. Its pages are crowded with

the moral imperative for man. The thorn and the brier are on the earth; but they are not blamed, because they wait for the era of the good people. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain; but the creation is not blamed, because it waits for the revealing of the sons of God. The lion and the lamb do not lie down together; but they are not blamed, because they wait for the age of peace that can issue only from the hearts of men. The coin rolls into dust and shadow and is lost; we do not blame the coin. The sheep wanders into desert and darkness and is lost; we do not blame the sheep. The son goes off into the swine field and is lost; and we do blame the son. The coin and the sheep have no communings with self, no sense of guilt, no road of [Pg 55] repentant return; but the son has all these. The Bible does utter its vigorous charge against man's sin; it is the ever-open court room into which the human conscience is summoned for judgment. The Book does not treat man as a machine whose cogs and wheels are moved only by outside force; nor does it treat him as a manikin, jerked hither and yon by irresponsible sensations; it rather dignifies him with personal responsibility. The Fall does not prevent climbing, if only man will take advantage of those gracious powers that are offered for his help. Emerson saw the meaning of this when he wrote his tribute to mankind based on its ability to respond to the moral order:

> So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, "Thou must,"
> The youth replies, "I can!"

Words like "ought" and "should" and "must" have gone forth from the Bible and have fairly penetrated the moral consciousness of the race. No other book so honors human nature with a sublime call to responsibility.

We now leave these general considerations and take up the several portions of the Scriptures with a view to ascertaining their contributions to a doctrine of man. The [Pg 56] foundation of that doctrine is seen in the account of the creation. Whether that account be poem, parable, allegory, or history, its meaning for this special point is the same. The climax of the creation is man. God is represented as changing chaos into cosmos, separating waters and land, fixing sun and moon in their places, bringing verdure to the surface of the earth, assigning birds and beasts and fishes to their spheres, and then as giving to man a wide rulership. "God made man to have dominion"—that is the biblical word; and the ages have been telling how true that word is. The Bible theory and the facts of life join in a coronation of man.

The account of the creation goes deeper than this in its estimate of mankind. Its conferring of power on man is explained by its conferring a nature on man. Man is made in the divine image. The Word was not content with one statement of that fact; it must needs give it double emphasis. "So God created man in his own image"—that would seem simple and strong enough. But the statement is strengthened by repetition, "In the image of God created he him." These twice-repeated words are the real charter of man's greatness. The atheist must admit that man has the dominion, but the believer holds that man has the dominion because he has the birthright. Man is not only God's [Pg 57] submonarch, he is God's image.

It is interesting and convincing to note how soon that primary truth about man's nature began to work. In the persecution under Diocletian the precious parchments of the Bible had been secretly carried from house to house. The charge that a Christian had given up the sacred Book in order to save himself from death was one of the most serious that could be presented. Many martyrdoms occurred because men preferred the Bible above their own lives. Though circulated under such difficulty, and though made into readable parchments at such expense of labor and money, the Bible was slowly impressing its doctrine of man upon the stubborn period. We are often smitten with

horror as we read stories which show how lightly human life was regarded by the Romans. Those dreadful scenes in the arena, where thumbs so often declined to turn down as a sign of mercy, are dire mysteries to men who have gotten the biblical standpoint. We are distant from that heartless mood because we are near to the Bible. The Book and the gladiator could not live together in peace. The Book at once began to call men from the tiers of bloody pleasure. With the conversion of Constantine, [Pg 58] superficial as it may have been, the change began. The emperor ordered many splendid copies of the Bible for the churches of his capital. He himself came under the spell of its human doctrine. Zealous Christian teachers may sometimes overstate the influence which the Bible exercised over later Roman law. Still there are some undoubted evidences of that influence. Constantine made a law forbidding that a criminal should be branded on the face, and he gave as his reason for the law that the image of God should not be marred! This leaves us in no doubt as to what had inspired the legislation. It was the simple beginning of a program that has not yet come to its consummation. The biblical idea of man routed one form of slavery, and it will yet rout all other forms. When men come to believe that man is made in the divine image all good movements for the betterment of life are set in the way to victory.

The legal portions of the Bible give us the like lesson, even though the approach to the lesson is different. Here we discover that humanity is worthy enough to call for conservation and protection. The legislation reaches to hygienic and sanitary details of minute character. The whole effort is to build a protecting fence about men. The Ten Commandments, studied in this light, become a very human document. Their harsh and [Pg 59] negative quality is softened into gentleness. They guard the goods of man—his property, his wife and children, his body, his good name. It would be possible to regard the Decalogue as a series of prohibitions in which the word “not” occurs with forbidding frequency. In this case the appropriate accompaniment is thunder and lightning, and the appropriate scroll for the writing is stone. This viewpoint is one sided and unfair. The Ten Commandments are prohibitions only because they are protections. They have been through many ages the kindly sentinels of society. They have taken the side of God, of his dumb creatures, and of men and women and little children. Considered in any just way, the legal portions of the Bible are a tribute not merely to divine authority, but to human worth.

The prophetical books add their lesson, and from a still different angle. They are filled with protests against man’s conduct, with wrath against his insincerities, and with predictions of his coming woe. The mouths of the prophets were not filled with compliments. Those stern men were not the flatterers of their own generations. Their sayings could be so elected as to make a degrading estimate of men. But here again we must get the full meaning of the message. In their last analysis the prophecies are a [Pg 60] marked tribute to potential man. Beyond the disturbed present they see the peaceful future. Beyond the clash of swords and the swish of spears they see the mild and productive era of the plowshare and the pruning hook. Beyond the unreal altars they see the incense of true worship arising to God. The prophets were, in the best sense, optimists, and they were optimists because they believed that all men would some day yield to the Lord. They beheld the whole earth filled with righteousness. They saw the stone cut loose from the mountain and filling the wide world. The healing river was to flow to all peoples. Jerusalem was to be the universal joy. The day would dawn when it would be unnecessary to say to any man, “Know thou the Lord.” The most dismal of the prophets foretold the perfect day. But all this means that the prophets foretold the perfect man and the perfect race. To proclaim that humanity, under the guidance of God, is so capable is to dignify human life beyond measure.

Nor are we lacking among the prophets an individual example of the power of self-respect. Nehemiah may not be the premier among his fellows, but he talks with a royal

self-consciousness. When messengers come, desiring that he shall go down into the plain for a parley with Sanballat, he declines by saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.” Again he is told that the enemy is coming, and he is counseled to go into the temple and cling to the altar for protection. Once more self-respect comes to the rescue; the reply is, “Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.” Here the potential man, foretold by the prophet, was the actual man. He had reached such a high doctrine of his own nature that the doctrine itself became the prevention of triviality and of cowardice. The rebuilded walls of Jerusalem arose from that spirit. Those walls were likewise an expression of the prophet’s faith in the future of his people. The prophetic confidence in man was second only to the prophetic confidence in God. This form of tribute to humanity is preeminent in the books of the prophets. [Pg 61]

In the devotional part of the Bible we should not naturally expect that tribute would turn manward. The tendency is seen in those sections of prophecy where the prophet himself has close dealings with God. When the greatest of the prophets sees the ineffable One and hears the awful trisagion of the seraphim, the prime confession is that his own lips are unclean and that he dwells in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Inasmuch as the Psalms are in large measure a liturgy of worship, their emphasis is on the greatness of Jehovah. Yet sometimes the emphasis turns toward man. The most striking illustration occurs in the eighth psalm. The writer there utters the feeling that we have all shared. The limitless expanse of the heavens, the shining of moon and stars in the far heights, the workmanship of the Lord in the vast universe—all this makes the psalmist feel that he is a mere speck in the scheme. Tried by those celestial measurements, he drops into insignificance. He is rescued from self-contempt only by a return to the message of Genesis. His despairing cry issues in a shout of personal triumph. “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” If materialism should conquer the Bible there is but one answer. The psalmist is saved by the Scripture, “Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.” It is no marvel that the first translators lowered the tribute and substituted “the angels” for God. The reverence that so often used a sign for the divine name trembled on the verge of such a human tribute. Still that tribute was a return to the doctrine that God had made man in his own image and had given him dominion over the works of his hand. In addition to all this, the Psalms are girded with the consciousness that man can enter into the august presence of the Lord. The mutual element in worship is an exaltation of man. The greatness of Jacob is greater when he meets with the heavenly visitant by the Jabbok brook. He becomes a prince. In the devotional books man claims his princely heritage. He treads the courts of the infinite King. [Pg 62] [Pg 63]

Moving forward into the New Testament, we find that the doctrine of man gathers more impressiveness. Jesus never cast any doubt upon the supreme place of man in the program of God. He put his harshest blame upon those who wickedly misled the children of the Father. He himself was chided because he sought the lowliest and the worst among men and women. He ate with the publican and gave his choicest lesson to the harlot. He was willing to exchange his social reputation for the privilege of associating with the humblest people. For a woman with a dark past he delocalized worship. From another he accepted the offering of grateful tears and put her conduct in contrast with that of the lordly Pharisee. He was the Prophet for the soul as such. He was the Priest who mediated gladly between the least one and the greatest One. We search his words in vain for anything that put contempt on man as man. [Pg 64]

When he compared men to the rest of creation it was always to human advantage. He told of the care of the shepherd for the sheep, and then he asked, “How much is a man

better than a sheep?" He declared that God noted the fall of sparrows, though they brought small price in the market place, and then, speaking to ordinary men and women, nearly all of them ignorant and more than half of them slaves, he said, "Are ye not much better than they?" Nor were these sayings really interrogative; they were exclamatory. Jesus knew that every normal man would feel the answer in his own soul. The worth of man was, in the teaching of Jesus, beyond debate.

He moved, also, from inanimate things to the assertion of man's worth. The lilies and grasses were in the care of God and waited on him for their vesture. "Will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" He made the worth of man the warrant of the care of God. At last he put man on one side of the scale and the whole world on the other side, and he affirmed that man outweighed the world. Men may barter themselves for half a township; but Jesus declared that it would be a disastrous bargain, if a man should accept the world in exchange for himself. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the world and lose himself? Or what will a man give in exchange for himself?" This is the final answer to any paltry teaching about the worth of man. [Pg 65]

When choice had to be made between man's interests and sacred laws and ordinances, Jesus gave preference to man. The shewbread was consecrated, but he approved the taking of it to satisfy human hunger. The Sabbath day was holy, but the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath; so the plucked ears of corn were a testimonial to men.

The attitude of Jesus toward childhood is tender evidence of his thought of humanity. The child has not yet won any achievement, save the loving assertion of its own dependency. The child in the midst represented humanity in its freshest and most natural form. It is said that some ancient religionists were accustomed to debate whether or not a child had a soul. Jesus would have scorned such a debate. He made the child the model of the kingdom. Human life unspoiled was lifted up as an example. To offend a little one was worse than being sunk by a millstone into the sea. A cup of cold water given to a child would win a special reward. The angels of the children behold ever the face of the Father. Thus the child, in all the teaching of Jesus, was made the creditor of the race. [Pg 66]

Jesus carried this doctrine of man on to the uttermost issue. We have never yet secured the full meaning of that "inasmuch" in the account of the final judgment. The Lord lives beyond the need of man's overt aid. But human beings are his representatives. The righteous had so far overlooked this fact, that they were forgetful of any ministry to him; and what had been the unconscious glory of the righteous was the unconscious tragedy of the wicked. The judgment day will be filled with human tests. He who has not acted as if human beings stood for God cannot meet the final standards. Jesus's picture of the judgment is a statement of divine authority; and it is an appraisement of human worth.

Thus do we see that from whatever side we come to the teaching of Christ, we find an exalted doctrine of man. The incarnation itself is a contribution to that doctrine. If we call it "the human life of God" it was a life lived for the sake of man. The Word became flesh and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, because men needed the message of that Word. The whole life of Jesus was lived for man. He himself said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." All those sacrificial phrases that describe the purpose of his coming add glory to human life. The joy that was set before him was the goal of a redeemed humanity. His living for men was simply his teaching about men, made over into concrete terms. In the Parable of the Good Shepherd he gives the revelation of his own attitude toward men. One soul, brought back into right relations with God, makes joy in heaven. It is the Eternal One who is represented as saying, "Rejoice with me." [Pg 67]

Men may deny the doctrine of the only begotten Son, but they can scarcely deny that that doctrine leads on to a wondrous doctrine of human worth.

The Cross, viewed in one light, becomes the very climax of the doctrine of man. Theologians have often laid their stress upon some single purpose of the divine sacrifice. One has said that the Cross appeases the anger of God; another that the Cross maintains the majesty of the law; another that the Cross is a moral influence wooing and winning the heart of man to God; another that the Cross is the expression of the Father's sorrow with the sins and sorrows of his children. But we may surely take one meaning of the Cross to be the divine estimate of man. God's sense of values must be [Pg 68] preserved. He did not send his Son to die for worms of the dust. That idea may fit an extreme mood of spiritual abasement. We may grant all possible condescension in the atoning act of God, but we cannot grant a condescension that dedicates infinite worth to finite worthlessness. Jesus died for men just because men were far more than worms of the dust. If we are to keep that theory of atonement that has long held the heart of the church, we are driven to affirm that the Cross gives us a divine estimate of mankind. No man ever appreciates the worth of himself until he gets the appraisal of Calvary. The dying of Jesus is not out of harmony with his teaching and his living. The whole program is like the garment taken from him on the day of crucifixion; it is woven throughout without seam. Men may decry a doctrine of substitution, but they cannot say that such a doctrine is a slight tribute to human worth. In such a doctrine thorns and nails and spears and all the drama of the Cross are made into tributes to the soul of man.

This carries us on to the biblical teaching of man's permanent worth. The doctrine of immortality makes its incalculable addition to the doctrine of man. There is a story, for [Pg 69] which the writer cannot vouch, that Thomas Carlyle in a mood of pessimism one day wrote this peevish estimate of man:

> What is man? A foolish baby!
> Vainly strives and fumes and frets!
> Demanding all, deserving nothing,
> One small grave is all he gets!

Language like this is certainly no contribution to the literature of self-respect. The story proceeds to relate that Carlyle's wife found this poetic depreciation lying on the table, and that she wrote the following confession and correction:

> And man? O hate not, nor despise
> The fairest, lordliest work of God!
> Think not he made thee good and wise
> Only to sleep beneath the sod!

Doubtless the tale is apocryphal. In any case the latter estimate is far nearer to the biblical conception, and it is altogether worthy of a woman's moral instinct. If man is to live forever, as the climax of Revelation insists, it is quite impossible for him to "think too much" of himself, unless he indulges in comparison of himself with others. An argument for immortality does not fall within the scope of this lecture; but the bearing of immortality, as declared in the Holy Scriptures, on the view that men must take of human nature, touches our purpose in a radical way. A deathless person must respect [Pg 70] himself. A deathless person must command the respect of a world—and of God. The doctrine of immortality adds an infinite measure to the doctrine of human worth.

Even the biblical representation of heaven secures a relation to this subject. The abode for immortal life, as well as immortal life itself, may be turned into a human estimate. The book of Revelation declares that the nations shall bring "their glory and honor"

into the Eternal City. This can only mean that men shall make some contribution to the eternal life. What they are and what they have done shall fill heaven with added value. The cities of earth shall transport treasures to the Heavenly City. Here, again, we come upon a reason based on the divine sense of values. God will not provide an Eternal Home that is any better than the Eternal Beings for whom he makes it ready. The gem is to be better than the setting. In a certain sense, therefore, jasper walls and pearl gates and gold streets, as seen in the descriptions of heaven, are tributes to human souls. The Bible tells us that "greater than the house is he that built it," and the Bible would tell us, also, that the occupant of the house is greater than the house. God will provide no [Pg 71] everlasting dwelling that is better than the everlasting dwellers. Heaven is made for man, and not man for heaven. The many mansions are tributes to the people that shall live in the Father's house. The Scriptures are reserved in their revealings of the other land; but their descriptions of celestial glories may be united with those other portions of the Bible that dignify the human spirit and may be taken as standing for the divine valuation of the essential selves of men.

This review of the teaching of the several sections of the Bible has confessedly sought for the words and ideas that exalt the doctrine of man. Allowing all possible discounts, and admitting all possible offsets, the residuum of instruction tending to glorify human nature is significant. We need not wonder that some thoughtful men have affirmed that the chief characteristic of Christianity is the value that it places on man. If we do not accept this statement, we can still declare that the Bible is the supreme Book when judged by its emphasis on human values.

Nor can there be any doubt of the need of this emphasis in our own age. As men crowd more and more into the great centers of population, the tendency will be to hold men cheaply. In former times man was often highly valued because of his rarity. On the far [Pg 72] Eastern plains a new face, not being often seen, was regarded with curious interest. Thus Abraham stood in the door of his tent in the heat of the day and welcomed the stranger, because the stranger was an event. But in the modern city the stranger is no longer an event; he is only an episode, or perhaps an incident. We pass him on the dense street, and we do not notice him at all. There are so many of him that, unless we are heedful, we shall come to regard him lightly just because he is hidden by the crowd. When factories grow so huge that men are known, not by their names, but by their numbers, only the scriptural emphasis upon men as such can save human beings from being deemed "hands" rather than souls. If the sin of the countryside is an excessive social interest that makes for gossip, the sin of the city is a social carelessness that makes for indifference. The various problems of our social life wait for their solution upon the Christian doctrine of man. When that doctrine has done its full service, race problems, labor problems, liquor problems, and all their dreadful accompaniments will issue into a righteous and intelligent peace. An immortal son of God, knowing himself, cannot be unjust to another immortal son of God, when once he knows his Brother.

This hints at the personal bearing of the doctrine. As men grow in moral and spiritual [Pg 73] experience, they find themselves using more and more the test of self-respect. Knowing that the reaction of certain behaviors makes them feel that a fragment of the soul has slipped away from them, so that they have the sense of smallness, they guard their natures lest legitimate pride should be destroyed. Andrews Norton once wrote to his son, Charles Eliot Norton, who was about to go abroad for an important service, telling the young man that his family and friends recognized that he had special powers for doing large and worthy things. Then he added that "this ought not to make one vain. On the contrary, their true tendency is to produce that deep sense of responsibility—of what we owe to God, to our friends, and to our fellowmen—which is wholly inconsistent with presumption or vanity." It was a wise father who wrote thus to his

son. If the Christian doctrine of man be true, no man can think too much of himself. There is a type of saving pride. Clough stated it in his well-known lines:

> Then welcome, Pride! and I shall find
> In thee a power to lift the mind
> This low and groveling joy above—
> ’Tis but the proud can truly love.

The pride that comes from the consciousness of the divine image has power to restrain from sins and trivialities, and it has power likewise to constrain toward holiness of character and largeness of service. One who has come to believe that he is made in the divine image, that he is one of the divinely appointed rulers of the world, that the great laws are designed for his protection, that the alluring prophecies of the future are declarations of his coming power, that his worship is the symbol of his partnership with the Most High, that the incarnation is in his interest, that the Infinite Teacher brought him matchless tributes, that the Cross of Calvary is an expression of his own valuation, that immortal life is his destiny, and that a glorious heaven is the fitting place for his final dwelling—such a one has gained all the preventions and all the inspirations of the Christian doctrine of self-respect. Sins and trivialities cannot flourish when one thinks so much of oneself; great affections and lasting consecrations seem natural to one so highly endowed. The conception that makes for the dignity of self makes also for the consideration of others. He who entertains this view begins to [Pg 74]

> Find man’s veritable stature out,
> Erect, sublime, the measure of a man,
> And that’s the measure of an angel,
> Says the apostle.

To such a one life becomes solemn and beautiful. He is now the son of God. While he knows not yet what he shall be, he sees the vision of the Elder Brother and so purifies himself even as he is pure. The world needs the gospel of the Son of God in order that it may learn the gospel of the sons of God. [Pg 75]

CHAPTER III

[Pg 76]

The Bible and Home

The significance of the home is seen in the fact that every human being is a son or a daughter. This ordinary statement at once insists on becoming extraordinary. It is difficult to think what life would have been, or even how it could have been, if children had been pushed upon the earth from some mysterious void and had been nurtured without the providential agency of fathers and mothers. So much do we realize the importance of the home that where it is impossible to maintain one, owing to the death, or inability, or worthlessness of parents, we still make provision for an institution that shall provide as many domestic features as can be won for the orphaned. This we call an Orphans’ Home. It is significant that the sociological tendency of the period drifts away from even this institution. The effort now is to bring the childless and the parentless together. Goldsmith said that the nakedness of the indigent world might be

clothed with the trimmings of the vain. There are those who affirm that, if the parentless and the childless could be brought into the company of homes, the Orphan Asylum would be no longer needed. [Pg 77]

Our imaginations may make an easy test. Let an authoritative edict go forth that after the approaching midnight the home would be banished, and that each community must adjust itself to some other form of social life. What would such an edict mean? The homes from which students have come are no more responsible for them. They constitute no longer the bases of supplies on which they can draw, nor the alluring hearthstones to which they can return. The workman turns no more his eager feet toward the lights of his cottage. The prince finds his palace removed and all its splendor ceases to invite him. Little children are herded into impersonal surroundings and become public rather than domestic charges. The scene of disaster could be described without merciful stint. These suggestions are enough to show that society could scarcely escape chaos if the home were to be destroyed. How much do the words father, mother, brother, sister, wife, husband, son, daughter mean? Empty out their closer significance, and you vacate much of life's meaning.

Nor is this the narrow word of an ecclesiastic or theologian. Drummond in The Ascent of Man claims that the evolution of a father and mother was the final effort of nature. John Fiske, as scientist and historian, points out the helplessness of infant life as binding parents into unity that grows out of responsibility. Soon after its birth the wee animal runs and leaps, while the wee bird does not wait long ere it flies from limb to limb; but the human babe in the ancient forest lies helpless in its log cradle for many months. Both Drummond and Fiske agree that by this program the God of nature was introducing patience, devotion, and sacrifice into the world and was making ready for the kingdom of heaven. It is plain that Drummond does not state it too strongly when he says that "the goal of the whole plant and animal life seems to have been the creation of a family which the very naturalist had to call Mammals," or Mothers. [Pg 78]

This represents somewhat the divine history of the home. The prophecy of the home likewise does some convincing work. The truth is that the home as an institution plants itself squarely in the path of some modern social theories. Some of those theories have begun by boldly demanding that the home be abolished because it has been made a buttress of private life and property. Not only has this suggestion been met with a horror that in itself expresses the instinctive conviction of the sacredness of the home, but it has been met with the insistence that the prophets should name their substitute for the hearthstone. This insistence has received nothing more than hazy and vague replies. The prophet stammers out some dark saying about "something better" or about the home as having fulfilled its mission in "the evolution of society"; and by the very helplessness of his speech he really becomes an advocate of closer domestic relations! It is interesting to note how these reformers seek to find a good path back from their social desert! They soon declare that the new regime must keep the home intact, and that only sporadic and irresponsible voices from their camp are lifted against the home's sanctity! The antihome prophet always has a hard task. He collides with one of the granite convictions of humanity. If he would save the rest of his theory he must save the home from the proposed destruction. God has set the solitary in families. Men look in vain for a better setting for the jewel of life. From all their seeking they come back in due season to the truth that, imperfect as the home may often be, it is still rooted and grounded in outer life and in inner instinct, and that it is futile to try to make better what God has made best. [Pg 79]

All this will serve for emphasizing the importance of the home, though much more might be added. When the man awakes in the morning, becomes aware of himself, and then hears the voices of his wife and children, he is immediately related to one of the [Pg 80]

fundamental institutions of society. If the Bible be, as we have claimed, preeminently the Book of Life, it must relate itself vitally to the home. Our inquiry, therefore, is, What bearing does the Book have upon the home? The answer must necessarily be sketchy and incomplete; but we can soon gather an answer that will establish the biblical drift of teaching.

The Bible begins with an impressive lesson of monogamy. In the Eden life one man and one woman join hands as partners in joy and work. Let the account be poetry, allegory, parable, the lesson is the same. In that intimate communion with God that found him in the garden in the cool of the day, bigamy and polygamy are not represented as being at home. Even the Fall is not described as quickly dropping man low enough to reach the dreadful level of promiscuity or of any of the approaches to so-called free love. It required time ere that downward journey could be made. Humanity in its innocence is not described as starting from the dens of polygamy.

But in season the Bible gives us some disconcerting facts. Bigamy and polygamy confront us in the lives of some worthies. Let it be allowed that sometimes the motive is the perpetuation of the home itself. Provision is sought against the curse of barrenness. Let it be allowed, also, that the Bible does not represent bigamy as working well. It brought discord into Abraham's tent. The peevish wife drives her own wretched substitute from the door, until the desolate Hagar stands in her loneliness and repeats the comforting ritual of the seeing God. The son of bigamy goes off into his wild life, with his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. The admirable thing about the second patriarch is his devotion to one woman. Neutral and characterless as Isaac seems to be, he still won a mention in the marriage service of the ages by his faithfulness to Rebecca alone. Upon the third patriarch bigamy was forced by a cruel deception. In truth a review of the Old Testament will show that any departure from the unity of the home made for trouble. It filled the moving tabernacles of the patriarchs with quarrels. It led David on to murder. It drenched Solomon in debauchery. It degraded the successive kings until it destroyed their power and ruined the nation. Its inevitable end was the loss of the land and the sadness of captivity. [Pg 81] [Pg 82]

The Old Testament records polygamy, but it does not applaud polygamy. When once a polygamist stood in the halls of Congress and defended his right to a seat by quoting the examples of the patriarchs, his plea did not avail. Not only was the conviction of the nineteenth century against his contention, but the mood of the very Book from which he quoted was his enemy. So far as we can judge, monogamy was the general rule among the Jewish people. The exemplars of bigamy and polygamy were mainly those whose position enabled them to flaunt the public sentiment of their day. The history of Old Testament polygamy is so sorrowful that the Hebrew people have reacted from it into a stanch defense for the monogamic home. The seduction of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, the unfilial licentiousness of Absalom, the sordid road of impurity trod by the later monarchs of Israel, and the despair of the Babylonish captivity, make a piercing case against polygamy. On the other hand, the unwavering faithfulness of the maid in the Song of Solomon, the patience of Hosea with his prodigal wife, the idyllic story of Ruth, all these became persuasive pleas for a home wherein one man and one woman should live together in loyal love even until death. [Pg 83] When Jesus came to give his message contemporaneous polygamy had all but ceased in Palestine. But easy divorce, sometimes called "consecutive polygamy," had become prevalent. The world was waiting for the voice of authority, and it heard that voice when Christ began to teach.

The teaching of Jesus in reference to marriage is unmistakable. It may impress many as severe; it cannot impress any as doubtful. If we accept him as the Supreme Teacher we receive a decision given with no equivocal terms. It is often said that the method of the

Lord was to offer general principles and to leave his followers to carry out these principles in the spirit of loving discipleship. Thus he declined to give detailed rules for the observance of the Sabbath, explicit instructions for the division of estates, definite laws for prayer and worship and almsgiving. Yet when he discussed marriage he gave both general principles and specific rules. If this was not the only case where he became sponsor for a rule it was surely the most emphatic case. He seemed to feel that concerning marriage and the home he must give a mass of distinct precepts. It was as if he deemed the home so sacred and its enemies so subtle and powerful as to make necessary some particular instruction.

[Pg 84] Perhaps we shall not err in saying that Jesus found in his time urgent reasons for specific and strong teaching about marriage. The Jews, who went to a mechanical extreme in their observance of the Sabbath law, had gone to an opposite extreme in their attitude toward the law of the home. In this regard the period was worse than our own, but it was not unlike our own. The domestic conscience of the Jews had been more or less weakened. Mere trifles were made excuses for the breaking up of home. Doubtless the influence of the Romans was making itself felt among the Hebrews. Professor Sheldon quotes Dorner as showing the reckless ease of divorce among leading Romans. One man divorced his wife because she went unveiled on the street; another because she spoke familiarly to a freedwoman; another because she went to a play without his knowledge. Even Cicero, proclaimed a very noble Roman, divorced his first wife that he might marry a wealthier woman, and his second wife because she did not seem to be sufficiently afflicted over the death of his daughter! “In fine,” says Professor Sheldon, “it was not altogether hyperbole when Seneca spoke of noble women as reckoning their years by their successive husbands rather than by the Consuls” (History of the Early Church, pages 29, 30).

[Pg 85] The records of this same period among the Romans will rout the claim that easy divorce tends to purity. Faithlessness to marriage vows was not seriously regarded, and there were instances of so-called noble women registering as public prostitutes in order that they might thus avoid the penalties of the laws! Easy divorce seemed to be accompanied by easy virtue, as if, indeed, both evils grew naturally out of the same soil. The Roman fashions were having their influence on the Jews. The sacred law was searched and was explained away with evil subtlety in order that men might be religiously released from the marriage bond.

Evidently, then, the times demanded that Jesus should save the marriage law from looseness. The ease of divorce was not unlike that in our own land to-day. If the teaching of Jesus was needed then it is needed now in order that marriage may recover its binding solemnity. On general principles we must all rejoice that Jesus did not give a dubious word on this sacred matter. It may be doubted whether any man who did not have the cause of his own pleasure to serve and who was not willing to subordinate a social law to the superficial joy of his own life, would be willing to modify the Saviour’s teaching. Certainly that teaching has long been the firm bulwark of the [Pg 86] married life. Had Jesus spoken with doubt, or had he given sanction to easy divorce, what would the results have been? Our homes would have been builded upon the sands of freakish impulses and of hasty tempers. But Jesus’s word puts rock into the domestic foundation. When it was given it was met by all of the objections which it still evokes. Some said that the teaching was extreme in its severity, quite outdoing the law of Moses in its demands. Others said that rather than to submit to a bond so unbreakable, it would be better not to marry at all. Still Jesus did not lower his teaching. God was the author of marriage; man must not assume to be its destroyer. God takes two persons and makes them one flesh; man must not cut that vital bond.

Plainly, then, Jesus felt that marriage established a family relationship which was to resemble other family relationships in its indissolubleness. How can a man get rid of his brother, or his sister, or his father or mother, when God has decreed a relation in the flesh that cannot be severed? One may live apart from brother or sister, or father or mother, as a matter of convenience or peace; but how can one destroy the relationship? In spite of angry decrees, is not the brother still a brother, and do not father and mother remain father and mother in defiance of all unfilial pronouncements of divorce? In [Pg 87] Jesus's view the second family relationship was as indissoluble as the first. If one were to argue from a certain standpoint it might be easy to claim that it must be even more indissoluble. A man does not choose his first home. It represents a necessity against which he may not strive. But he does choose his second home, and it represents a union for which he is himself distinctly responsible. Why should a man be allowed to divorce himself from the home which is founded by his liberty while still being inexorably bound to the home which was founded without his choice? Jesus taught that the very constitution of society, as resting on the word of God, demanded that the second home be as sacredly unbreakable as the first. The "one flesh" must not be severed in either case.

Hence it comes about that, while the law of Jesus does not allow divorce, unless for the one reason mentioned later, it does not forbid separation. The sin does not consist in putting away the wife when conditions are unbearable; it does consist in marrying another. He does not insist that the quarrelsome shall live amid their brawls; but he does insist that they shall not go into another experiment that degrades a sacred covenant. We do not long listen to the specious arguments for easy divorce, with the [Pg 88] privilege of remarriage, without discovering that these arguments affirm either that personal purity is impossible or that personal convenience and pleasure are the primary demands of life. Jesus did not so teach. Dr. Peabody, in his matchless discussion of Jesus's teaching about the family, well says: "The family is, to Jesus, not a temporary arrangement at the mercy of uncontrolled temper or shifting desire; it is ordained for that very discipline in forbearance and restraint which are precisely what many people would avoid, and the easy rupture of its union blights these virtues in their bud. Why should one concern himself in marriage to be considerate and forgiving, if it is easier to be divorced than it is to be good?" (Jesus Christ and the Social Question, p. 159.) That these words touch the evil heart of many modern divorces there can be no doubt. The emphatic teaching of Jesus was that marriage should not be regarded as a breakable agreement of convenience, but rather as an indissoluble pledge of permanent union.

Whether Jesus allowed any exception to this law remains a debatable matter among the scholars. Some contend that the "save for fornication" clause is an interpolation, and that the teaching of Jesus admitted no divorce whatsoever. Others contend that the [Pg 89] gospel writers who omit this clause regarded the one reason for divorce as so certain that it was not deemed necessary to mention its legitimacy. It may be claimed with a show of reason that the regarding of adultery as an exceptional sin against the married life stands for something instinctive in human nature. Notwithstanding all statements that desertion and abuse and drunkenness may be so aggravated as to constitute offenses worse than fornication, normal men and women continue to assign a lonely infamy to the sin of carnal unfaithfulness. If Jesus did use the exceptional clause there is not wanting evidence that his word is confirmed by an all but universal feeling. Many races have been disposed to decree that the sin of adultery is the one iniquity sharp and incisive enough to sever the "one flesh." Perhaps it is safe to affirm that the great majority of good men and women do not shrink from the exception as being unworthy of Jesus's teaching. But, the exception being granted, that teaching is clear and uncompromising. When that teaching becomes the law of the world divorce courts will be largely emptied and the marriage vows will be assumed with less haste and with more solemnity.

The New Testament is thus seen to be the headquarters of that conception of marriage [Pg 90]
that alone gives a firm foundation to the home. It is impossible to conceive what would have been the dismal statistics of divorce, if Jesus had made the marriage bond of slender strength. Truly the situation is bad enough as it is. Often the causes for divorce are trivial; sometimes they are deliberately arranged by the separating parties! and occasionally the much-married comedian is hailed on the stage with a joking tolerance. But when more than ninety per cent of the marriages of the land stand the tests of time and are kept in fidelity until the "one flesh" is severed by death, it is evident that some strong force still guards the home from desecration.

We need not inquire what that force is; it is the Word of Christ. Among those who follow him least, he has made divorce "bad form"; among those who follow him somewhat, he has made it doubtful morals; while among those who accept him as Lord and Master, he has made it sacrilege and blasphemy. The devotees of pleasure and convenience and lust may well quarrel with the decree of Christ. The devotees of compromise may seek to refine and discount his explicit law. Yet all those who see in the home the very center and heart of a properly organized society, as well as the very ordination of the Lord God Almighty, will not cease to be grateful that Christ spoke so [Pg 91]
unmistakably concerning its solemn sanction. He fixed forever the difference between the civil marriage and the Christian marriage. He filled the marriage service with religious terms. "The sight of God," "instituted of God," "mystical union," "holy estate," "Cana of Galilee," "reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God," "God's ordinance," "forsaking all other," "so long as ye both shall live," "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health," "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," "God hath joined together," "in holy love until their lives' end"—all these words are Christ's words, his Spirit confirmed them in the service of his church. That service may well close with the prayer which declares that his is "the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever."

More and more careful students of both sociology and Christianity will see that no safe conception of marriage can be found save in the words of the Lord. The civil contract idea is full of peril. The case of Percy Bysshe Shelley, the English poet, is in evidence. The illustration may be extreme, but it will the better show the sure goal of that theory of marriage that forgets God. Shelley, for a time at least, was an outright atheist. [Pg 92]
Bowing God out of the universe, he could not consistently leave God in his theory of marriage. His college thesis was an argument for atheism. Given sufficient provocation and motive, Shelley was sure to reach the limit of a godless idea of marriage. It seems almost impossible for men with a literary mania to see social or moral fault in their heroes, and their tendency often is to absolve writers of genius from the usual laws. Shelley married the daughter of a retired innkeeper. In two years he separated from his wife and two children. Three years later the wife drowned herself, meeting voluntarily a fate which Shelley was to meet involuntarily. An apologist for Shelley says, "The refinements of intellectual sympathy which poets desiderate in their spouses Shelley failed to find in his wife, but for a time he lived with her not unhappily; nor to the last had he any fault to allege against her, except such negative ones as might be implied in his meeting a woman he liked better." The more we study this language the more does its superficiality impress us. Let it be said that Shelley was young and heedless when he first married; let it be said, also, that he was in general strangely lovable and warmly philanthropic; and let it be said, even, that he was in his lifetime execrated beyond his [Pg 93]
deserts. But it would not be so easy to palliate his conduct if one's own daughter had drowned herself to end her sorrow, or if one's own daughter had traveled with him, unmarried, over France and Switzerland! Somehow literary admiration plays tricks on moral natures. Doubtless the judgment of Shelley on the basis of his boyish poem "Queen Mab" was unfair, even as its surreptitious publication without his consent was unfair. None the less one may trace a connection between his college production in

defense of atheism and his later domestic conduct. No marriage has a sure foundation apart from a religious sanction. The more we consider the possibilities suggested by this confessedly extreme illustration, the more will we cling to the strict theory of Jesus as against the limping logic of any loose sociologist.

We have thus seen that the foundation of the home comes to the Bible, and particularly to the goal of the Bible's revelation in Christ, for its solidity. Other foundations are fashioned of yielding sand. The marriage ceremony might well be modified in some minor regards; but the word of Christ will insist that the ceremony shall represent no flimsy contract. While he rules the pronouncement will be, "God hath joined together"; [Pg 94] and the human response will remain, "till death us do part."

The relation of Jesus to the home goes farther than his word about marriage, deep and far-reaching as that is. His life emphasized the sacredness of the family relation. He went back from the scene in the Temple to be "subject unto his parents." He wrought his first miracle on the occasion of a marriage. Many of his miracles of mercy were performed in answer to a family plea. He heard the cry of a mother when he healed the daughter of the Syrophœnician woman, and again when he raised up the son of the widow of Nain. He heard the cry of a father when he cast out the evil spirit and restored a stricken son, clothed and in his right mind. He heard the cry of sisters when he stood weeping at the grave of Lazarus. The domestic plea quickly reached his heart and summoned his aid. It was so even in the personal sense. In the agony of the crucifixion he did not fail to commend his mother to the care of his best-to-do disciple, and to cause the writing of that simple statement, "From that day that disciple took her into his own home."

Indeed, through all the life of Jesus he glorified the family, unless the family stood in the way of his truth or work. Emerson said once, "I will hate my father and my mother [Pg 95] when my genius calls me." We all know where Emerson got those words; they were not written on his own authority. Jesus made our human ancestry subject to our divine ancestry. Above the earthly parents he saw the heavenly Father. The God who ordained the home was above the home. But Jesus would allow no other exception. He himself lived by that supreme law. He was homeless in obedience to his own divine mission. There is a peculiar illustration of this, hidden somewhat by our awkward distribution of the Bible into chapters and verses. The seventh chapter of John ends with the words, "They went every man to his own house." It is not difficult for us to reproduce the scene, even with its Oriental touches. The discussion of the day is over. The hearers did what men and women have been doing ever since—they turned to the twinkling lights of their homes. Soon the crowds had disappeared and the various persons had joined themselves to their family groups. The homeless One was left alone. The first verse of the eighth chapter of John says, "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives." It was just an instance of his tragedy, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The homelessness of Jesus was vicarious. Sometimes still he calls his own into the same vicariousness. He separates [Pg 96] sons and daughters from their fathers and mothers and sends them afar to preach his kingdom. Wherever those homeless ones may go, the meaning of home takes on a new and sacred meaning. They carry with them the Word and Spirit of him who, being weary, invited the weary ones to come to him for rest; being thirsty, invited the thirsty ones to drink of the water of life; being poor, invited the poor to come to him for riches; being dead, invited the dying ones to look to him for eternal life; and, being homeless, still commands the world to look to him for the spirit of home. Even though he himself went down into the darkness of the Mount of Olives, ever since his day the people that have heard and heeded his word have found the lights of home more inviting and the mission of the home more divine.

There is yet another consideration which must be noted ere we receive the full message of Jesus about the home. The teaching of Jesus concerning God was almost wholly based on a figure of speech derived from the home. In the Old Testament God is mentioned under the title of fatherhood but seven times. Five times he is spoken of as the father of the Jewish people; twice he is spoken of as the father of individual men. Only once in the sweep of the ancient Scriptures is there found a prayer addressed to [Pg 97] God as Father. God was the King of kings, and the Lord of hosts; he was Creator and Lawgiver. But in the knowledge of the people he was not yet Father. The world waited long ere men found an Elder Brother who could break the spell of their orphanhood and reveal to them a Father. When Jesus desired to tell men what God was like he went to their homes and found therein the form of his teaching. He sprinkled the New Testament with the domestic name of God. Two hundred and sixty-five times God is spoken of under the title of Fatherhood. The sacredness of the home relation could not receive holier emphasis.

Thus the homes which are founded by the Lord become revelations of the Lord. Domestic relations are teachers of theology. Well may we speak of a Family Bible! There is such a Bible. The illustration of theology is the family illustration. Some day we shall recover that theology, and we shall place the theologies that have superseded it in their secondary place. Jesus was the final Teacher of theology, and we must give him the primacy. Under his teaching every true home is a symbol of the divine household; every true parent is a limited representative of God; every true son is an example of the filial spirit that is religion. The path of prayer starts with the word Father. The doctrine [Pg 98] of providential care is explained by the word Father. The call to obedience refers to the will of the Father. The deeper tragedy of sin comes from the fact that the offense is against the Father. Conversion is a return to the Father.

Taking, then, the direct teaching of Jesus with reference to marriage as the founding of the home, taking his life in its merciful relation to the home, and taking his teaching about God as based on the home, we are justified in saying that Jesus was the Prophet and Saviour of the Family. The vision that he gave of the other life took on that form again. He declared that he was preparing a place for his own, and he called that place the “Father’s house.” He was likewise preparing a home this side of the many mansions. A Carpenter he was. He has builded many sanctuaries, some for worship, and some for the mercy that we show to the sick, and aged, and destitute. But the Carpenter of Nazareth is the builder of the true home. His word lays its foundations, raises its walls, places its capstone, and furnishes its atmosphere of peace and love. The home that is placed on any other word cannot stand the shock of the tempest. It is based on sand; and when the winds and rains and storms of passion come, the home will fall, [Pg 99] and great will be the fall thereof. The world needs to-day the lesson of Jesus about the home; and it needs, also, the spirit of Jesus in the home. When men and women yield to that spirit, extravagance will be checked, forbearance will be increased, love will be promoted, peace will be established. Husband and wife will not then plead that Jesus’s strict decree concerning marriage may be annulled. Earthly homes will be like vestibules of the Father’s House.

There remains for brief discussion the relation of the Epistles of the New Testament to the home life of the people. The tendency here has been to give undue emphasis to certain phases of Paul’s teaching. Some reformers, especially some radical feminists, have spoken of the great apostle’s teaching with scant respect. The command to wives to obey their husbands has been kept apart from the command to husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. Christ loved the church so that he gave his life for it; and when husbands love their wives to that sublime extent, obedience is no longer demanded for tyranny. All technical matters aside, it will be seen that the apostolic treatment of the domestic relations, touching the relative duties of husbands

and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants, shows a marked balance. When each party keeps his portion of the precepts, and is strictly minded to fulfill precisely his part of the apostolic contract, debates about primacy and authority find their gracious solution in mutual love. Unless we should wish to make undue account of Saint Paul's doctrine of the husband's primacy, we cannot say that his attitude toward womankind was marked by anything other than utmost respect. Just what his own domestic experiences were is a question of age-long doubt. If we study his actual references to women we shall find a series of compliments too deep to serve as the expression of a superficial gallantry and too genuine to allow the author to be classed as a hater of the mothers and sisters and wives of the race. Near the end of his life Paul caught the vision of his Master. Beyond his wanderings he saw a destination; above his imprisonments he saw a freedom; after his shipwrecks he saw a haven; and the destination and freedom and haven were all expressed in the words "at home." "At home," "at home with the Lord," this was Paul's conception of the waiting heaven. He, too, exalted the home by making it the forefigure of heaven. [Pg 100]

We have now presented enough to justify the statement that the Bible is the stanch friend of the home. As long as men and women read and obey the Book, and love and follow the Lord of the Book, their feet will turn reverently homeward as to the place of God's appointing, as to the school of God's own discipline, as to the place of God's own joy, and as to the anteroom of God's own heaven. [Pg 101]

CHAPTER IV [Pg 102]

The Bible and Education

The man whose program of daily life suggests the outline of these chapters awakes in the morning to the consciousness of himself. He is soon aware of the presence of his family and catches the sense of home. Directly the children are made ready for school and join that romping procession that moves each day at the joint command of parents and teachers. In the normal Christian community this fact of school-going is all but universal. In such a community the illiterate person is so exceptional as to be a curiosity; he is marked by separateness if not by distinction. All of us have marched to school; all of us have had teachers.

The fact is still more significant. School-going is not merely a general experience; it is a long experience. It controls about one fourth of life. Indeed, if we figure the average span of life, the school claims more than one fourth of the individual career. Many persons continue formal school work into the third decade, while many give a score and a half of years in making educational preparation for the remaining twoscore years of the allotment. [Pg 103]

Beyond this, the whole educational scheme involves countless millions of dollars. Our bookkeeping is scarcely rapid enough to keep up with the finances of the system. In our own country it really seems as if education had become a primary passion. Our school buildings yearly become more imposing and more costly. Our college endowments annually leap to more generous figures. Our largest philanthropies seek the privilege of enlarging educational opportunity. It thus requires no long observation to convince any

thoughtful man that our educational program, involving every young life in the nation and ideally every young life on the planet, is of incalculable meaning. Each morning an army of many millions, ranging from wee kindergartners up to adult postgraduates, moves to the schoolroom door. The whole scene is as impressive as it is human. The question naturally comes, What started that procession? What inspiration keeps it moving through the years? Is there one Book that leads in some forceful way to the study of many books? Does the Bible have any sure relation either to the enthusiasm or to the efficiency of our educational life? If our friend of the day's program could discover the intricate influences that unite in sending his children to the school, would [Pg 104] he find that any large credit must be assigned to the Book?

The aim now is not to show the place that the Bible has had in the curriculum of the world's education; nor yet is it to show the direct effect that the Bible has had upon the world's instruction. The Bible has been the supreme text-book, even as it has been the supreme force, in the schools of nearly two millenniums. These facts have been well set forth in many treatises. The purpose now is simpler and more meaningful: to trace to its main sources the influence which the great Book has had upon the intellectual life of the race.

We are met at the outset by the singular fact that the Bible has little to say specifically concerning education. Nowhere in its pages do we read the command, "Thou shalt found schools." The literalist who started out to find a biblical order for education, as such, would come back from an unrewarded search. But we have long ago discovered that the silence of the Bible does not constitute a commandment. There are some things that are stronger than detailed orders. An outer law that has fought an inner sanction has usually fared badly in history. On the other hand, the inner sanction, unenforced by any objective form of obligation, has won some big victories. An explicit command to [Pg 105] act as an immortal is not so powerful as the implicit conviction that we are immortal. It is safe to declare that the implications of Scripture are often as deep and influential as its explications. If, then, the flowers of knowledge bloom not by command in the fields of the Bible, may we still find there the seeds out of which such flowers inevitably grow? If the school building is not definitely prescribed, as was the Temple of Solomon, does the Book yield in a deeper sense the wood and stone and mortar by which the building must surely rise? Answers to these figurative questions will go far toward determining the relation of the Bible to education. The contention now is that the Bible has been the fountain whence streams of intellectual life have flowed, and that, minor influences being freely admitted, these streams may be traced to the Scripture's implicit doctrine of human responsibility.

In discussing the bearing of the Bible on learning much has been made of the example of the Bible's mightiest characters. This fact is striking, and it lends itself to popular treatment. The average man takes a truth more readily when it is offered to him in a human setting. Hence it may be granted that the spirit of the Book in its influence on education has been supplemented by its concrete examples. In the patriarchal era the [Pg 106] majestic figure is that of Abraham. Whatever the critics may say about the historicity of his person, they can hardly doubt the historicity of the intellectual process by which some "Father of the Multitude" must have reached the creed of the divine unity and spirituality. We could not expect, of course, to find organized education in the primitive days of religious history. But, after all, education is relative. An eminent American graduated from Harvard in 1836 when he was sixteen years of age. In this day his sixteen years and his completed course of study would barely admit him to the Freshman class. So Abraham's education must be graded by the standard of his dim and far day. Tradition represents him as reaching the central doctrine of the Jewish, Mohammedan, and Christian faith by a method of reasoning. You may say of his physical journey that he went out, not knowing whither he went, but you cannot say

that of his intellectual journey. While his feet pressed an unknown way, his mind and heart traveled straight toward the discovered God. If the best educated man of a period is he who sees most deeply and clearly into its essential truths and problems, then the "Father of the Faithful," whoever he was and whenever he came, was the supreme scholar of his generation. [Pg 107]

As the life of the chosen people reaches more definite form, the place of education is more plainly seen. Doubtless most men would agree that Moses was the arch figure of the Old Testament. He is represented, both by the Scripture and by the tradition given among the Jewish historians, as having the best mental furnishing of his day. The book of the Acts says of him that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." Clemens Alexandrinus records that Moses had the finest teachers in Egypt, and that the choicest scholars were imported from Greece and Assyria to instruct the adopted prince in the arts and sciences of their respective countries. Perhaps we must allow something for the idealizing habit here; but it is significant that both sacred and secular history unite in declaring that the Lawgiver was learned.

In the era of Prophecy we find the same development, only it is more speedy. Elijah may have been the crude and forceful son of mountain and rock, but his successor is the product of one of the numerous "schools of the prophets." Although intellectual training might be presumed to have little to do with the stern function of Old Testament prophesying, the "school" arrived quickly and began the training of the young men. [Pg 108] Criticism has not attacked the view that the book of Isaiah bears marks of high culture. If that book had two authors, the ancient world is entitled to the credit of a second scholar. When the radical is done with the story of Daniel we have left at least the schoolroom in which the youthful prophet gained his superior wisdom. It would appear that the examples of the worthies of the Old Testament give slight encouragement to the idea that any type of selection or any mood of afflatus may not be supplemented by trained intellect in the kingdom of God.

We need not halt long with the like lesson from the New Testament. Much has been made of the fact that the twelve apostles were uneducated men. Doubtless we often do their intellectual life scant justice. Desiring to score in an argument, we give it out as an evidence of the divinity of the faith that it conquered in spite of the disciples' lack of education. The truth is that the New Testament does not warrant the application to the apostles of such words as "illiterate." Some of them wrote books that have moved the ages. But, whatever the fact be here, he would be wild indeed who would find in ignorance any explanation of the gospel's victory. Let us remember, moreover, that, when the "unlettered" Twelve were cramping the universal faith into a local religion, [Pg 109] the corrector of their blunder was the "lettered" Paul. In his statement of experience he was ever ready to say that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest Jewish teacher of the day. After Christ Paul is the colossal figure of the New Testament; and there are those who would confidently declare him the greatest man who has walked the earth since Calvary. For a review of his education, let anyone read a standard Life of the Apostle. We thus gather the one result from both the Old and the New Testament. Moses was the mightiest personality of the one, and Paul was the mightiest human personality of the other; and both were highly educated. The signal examples of the Bible range themselves on the side of education.

As in all things else, so in the relation of the Bible to the intellectual life we reach the climax only when we come to Christ. Here, too, we find in the life of Christ that same element of paradox that we often find in his words. That saving was losing, giving was getting, and dying was living were apparently contradictory statements that real life proved to be true. Where words seemed to fight each other, the deeper facts were found to live in peace. So Jesus in his personal influence was ever reaching goals of which the [Pg 110]

paths did not give promise. This is seen peculiarly in his relation to the intellectual life. He left no manuscripts. The only time he is represented as writing was when he wrote the sentence of the sinning woman on the forgetful sands of the earth. Yet he who wrote no books has filled the world with books. Something in him quickly evoked Gospels and Epistles which were forerunners of a marvelous literature. Even this moment thousands of pens are being moved by him. He wrote no books, and still he writes books evermore.

It was so with his relation to the schools. Men tell us that the incarnation imposed a limitation on intellect—that it involved a kenosis, an emptying of knowledge even as of power. Be that as it may, our human explanations do not easily reach the mystery of his influence on the schools of the world. Did the boy Jesus go to school in Nazareth? Was his mother his only earthly teacher? Did his neighbors speak literal truth in the question, "Whence hath this man wisdom, having never learned"? The silent years give no answer to the questions. But this we do know: He who went to school slightly or not at all has sent a world to school. He who founded no immediate institution of learning has dotted the planet with colleges. His schoolroom was itinerant and unroofed. It [Pg 111] moved quickly from town to city, from capital to desert, from mountain to seashore. We have dignified it with a great name. The school of Jesus, whose plant and endowment and faculty all centered in one life, is named "the College of Apostles."

He said to them, "Go, teach." They went and they taught. They were not deliberate founders of schools. But the heart of Jesus contained schools, and they, having gotten their hearts from him, carried schools with them. When the gospel reached England and Germany, education reached those countries and began to thrive. The vast majority of the first one hundred colleges founded in America were builded by the followers of the Great Teacher.

Now, this unique relation of Jesus to the educational life of men is not accidental. Subtle as are the laws which determine it, those laws work effectively. They are elusive, but once in a while we glimpse their ways and meanings. The New Testament seems to feel their presence. It calls Christ a Teacher. Forty-three times it uses his name in connection with the word "teach" in its various forms. The world gets the same impression. It persists in calling Jesus the Greatest Teacher. It must note the schoolroom phrases with which the account of his life is filled. The prologue of his [Pg 112] wonderful message on the Mount illustrates this. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them." The posture of Jesus was that of the teacher. His audience was made up of "disciples," that is, of pupils. He "taught" them. All this might be called a superficial play upon mere words. But we may go further and discover that the method of Jesus was the method of the teacher. He put his effort into other lives in order that these lives might, within their various limitations, duplicate his own. His work was largely devoted to the preparation of a select few. Often he left hundreds and thousands that he might be alone with Twelve. He poured himself into his disciples, his scholars. He thus did what every true teacher must do: He committed the cause of his life to those whom he schooled into faith and character and power.

Nor did the teaching method halt here. The good teacher makes the things of the earth serve as approaches to the highest developments. This Jesus did supremely. Long before men made "nature study" an educational fad, Jesus made it an ethical and spiritual service. He pressed flowers, mustard seeds, grapes, wine, thistles, corn, figs, [Pg 113] into the lessons of his roving school. He made nature study so effective that along a path of lilies men walked to God. When it was necessary to individualize in order to come to this high result, Jesus took up that burden of teaching. His school, like all other schools since its day, enrolled "a son of thunder." It took the love that suffered long to

make John, the son of thunder and lightning and vaulting ambition, into the son of tender love. It took the patience that knows no failure to change the shifting sand of Simon's nature into the rock of Peter's character. All these considerations will convince us that we may go to Christ with the pedagogical, as well as with the religious motive. We do not wonder that a man should have crept to him in the darkness and should have said, "We know that thou art a teacher."

There is yet another side of the subject that calls for emphasis. The Bible and Jesus give the ideal of the intellectual life, an omniscient God. The God who is perfect in character is often lifted before us. We hear the voice saying, "Be ye holy; for I the Lord your God am holy." Yet we interpret the call narrowly. Christ has come to us with the call to purity. To the attentive he comes just as truly with the call to knowledge. He has given us a gospel for the body, and that gospel teaches that drunkards and other defilers [Pg 114] of the human temple of God cannot inherit his kingdom. He has given us a gospel for the spirit, and that gospel commands that the inmost realm of life be given to his sway. He has likewise given us a gospel of the mind, and that gospel cannot be omitted from the fullness of the blessing of Christ. The God revealed in Christ knows all things. He counts the hairs of our heads. He marks the petals of the flowers. He notes the fall of the sparrows. He is all-knowing and all-wise.

Even though the ideal be a staggering one, we are still told to be like God. Some day we shall appreciate more the duty that speaks to us in Jesus's revelation of an omniscient God. As yet we hardly dare press to its full meaning the call implied in that revelation. We have said that the man who neglects and stunts and poisons his body is a sinner. We have said that the man who dwarfs and represses his spirit is a sinner. Are we ready to say that the man who gives his mind no chance, the man who fails to move on to the ideal of an omniscient God, is likewise a sinner? Is God's perfect spirit a goal for his children, and is God's perfect mind removed from our vision of duty? If we are to start on the endless march that leads to the purity of God, are we freed from the [Pg 115] obligation of starting on the endless march that leads to his knowledge? We may shrink from the conclusion that is here involved; and our shrinking may be only an added evidence that we have omitted one element from the divine ideal.

Just here we are struck with the consciousness that we shall need some great dynamic, if we are ever to start toward this unspeakable goal. Evidently we have not reached the last thing in Christ's relation to education. Confucius was a great teacher, but his system has not produced schools. Mohammed was a great teacher, but his system has left his followers wallowing in ignorance. Though Mohammedanism has proclaimed an omniscient God, somehow that beacon on the infinite height has not coaxed the Turk on to its shining. Mohammedanism has offered the ideal, but it has lacked the power. On the contrary the system of Jesus seems to have had a genius for diffusing education. It has been a vast normal school. The purer and freer and more spiritual its form, the mightier has it been as an educational force. If we list the nations of the earth in classes with reference to literacy and illiteracy, we shall find that the farther the nations are from the Bible, the more dense is their ignorance. We shall find, too, that where the [Pg 116] people are the freest in their relation to the Bible, there the ignorance is least. Plainly the Bible with its crowning revelation in Christ does furnish something of a dynamic toward education. The school has been the inevitable companion of the church. This is because the church, in addition to giving a list of inspiring examples, and in addition to lifting up the uttermost ideal, has also emphasized an obligation under the leadership of the ever-present Spirit. It remains to show the nature of the obligation which the Spirit has enforced with reference to knowledge. Perhaps this can be done more clearly by taking the attitude of the Scriptures toward slavery as illustrating their attitude toward ignorance.

When Jesus faced his audiences he looked upon men who were in bondage as well as upon men who were in ignorance. It is frequently said that Christ did not attack slavery. In the days before the war the biblical literalist, who believed in freedom, had a hard time with his Bible. He found that the Bible did not condemn slavery, but that the Bible did give concerning it certain regulations. The pro-slavery orators made good use of the letter to Philemon. The people who believed in human liberty, and who likewise believed in a mechanical and verbal theory of biblical inspiration, passed through [Pg 117] intellectual agony in the period of anti-slavery agitation. If human bondage was the sum of all villainies, why did not Jesus condemn it with unsparing invective? Why did not the apostles enter upon an immediate crusade for its downfall?

The answer is that Christ in the deepest way did condemn slavery, and that the apostles in the realest way did begin their crusade. They gathered no visible army, and they enforced no written statute, but Christ stated and his followers promulgated a conception of humanity that prophesied the melting of all chains. Usually the claim is that the Golden Rule was the primary foe of slavery, but the Golden Rule is of little force, apart from that doctrine of human personality that pervades the New Testament. Give that doctrine power, and it would refuse to live in the same world with slavery. That doctrine, under a Captain, was a delivering army. That doctrine, under a King, was an Emancipation Proclamation. The Golden Rule had been given in negative form by Confucius, and it went to sleep in his maxims. That rule had been uttered negatively by Plato, but it nestled quietly in his poetry. Hillel approached the positive statement of the rule, but he does not get credit for being its author. The glory of a truth lies with the one who gives it power. Jesus made the Golden Rule leap to its feet. He turned it into a [Pg 118] most effective traveler. It praised God on its wide journeys. It began to work wonders.

That work was slow, but it was both sure and thorough. The Rule had power behind its saying. At length the Spirit carried that gracious weapon over the seas and laid it in the hearts of Clarkson and Wilberforce. Soon the English flag floated over freemen everywhere. Again the Spirit carried the doctrine over other seas and lodged it in the hearts of Lovejoy, Phillips, and Garrison. Directly four million sable faces were glowing with the light of liberty. Jesus had said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” The word had essentially a spiritual meaning, but it was worked out, also, in a splendid literalness. The Son made men free, not primarily by the force of law, nor yet primarily by the violence of armies, but rather by the conquest of disposition. The honor of the victory is with the Bible theory of humanity, made strong with the power of Christ.

Now what the truth of the Bible did in tearing down slavery, it is continually doing in routing ignorance. The connection is subtle, but it is vitally real. The doctrine of personal responsibility is atmospheric in the Bible. It is equally comprehensive. Men are held responsible for their bodies. Drunkenness, adultery, and all forms of sensuality [Pg 119] are condemned. This is at the bottom of life. But at the top of life firmer stress is placed. The spirit of man is made a field of reckoning. The divine dominion over motive is strongly asserted. And that comprehensive responsibility claims the mind. The first great commandment of the new dispensation is that we must “love God with all the strength, with all the soul, with all the *mind*.” Men may differ about the precise meaning of the mind’s love for the Lord, but the Christian sense of duty has asserted it in strange fashions. From vast revivals young men and women have gone forward intellectually and have sought the higher education. Conversion has set free their intellects and has made them feel the duty of intellectual development. The pressure of the Christian ideal has been on them. They have answered the call of the God who is infinitely good, and they must now answer the call of the God who is infinitely wise. An elusive intellectual law is written sure and large in the code of the Great Kingdom.

It is as certainly a commandment of God as if it had been thundered among the crags and lightnings of a new Sinai.

The conviction of the church at this point has not always come to definition; nor has it always risen even to consciousness. For all that, it has risen to practical life and has struggled always for outward expression. Feeling that the empire of God is over all of life, man must submit his mind to the divine rule. Hence it follows that the man who is intellectually lazy, as well as the man who is intellectually dishonest, is a sinner. This statement may shock those who have a surplus of caution, but these may reassure themselves with the conviction that any theory may be fearlessly accepted, if it brings us face to face with God at any point of our total life. The failure to follow this biblical idea has brought a penalty always. No denomination that has fought or slurred education has led a large and victorious life; on the contrary it has invariably become one of the fading and dwindling forces of God's work. The God of wisdom is evermore against the promoters of ignorance. So do we find that, by the examples of its greatest characters, by the life of its Greatest Teacher and its ruling Lord, by the vision of its supreme ideal, by the assertion of its inclusive theory of consecration, and by the divine dynamic which it brings to bear upon the mind, the Bible has become the steadfast friend of proper education. It has opened the doors of countless schools and has bidden the children of men to enter the portals of learning with the assurance that all truth is of God. [Pg 120] [Pg 121]

The Bible renders education the service of inspiration, and it renders it the service of proper restraint. When any one faculty of human life becomes a monarch it always makes for trouble. Zeal without knowledge tends to breakage; knowledge without zeal tends to waste. The Bible does not make intellect all. Man has mind, and he must use that. Man has sensibility, and he must use that. Man has will, and he must use that. Man must get the truth out of his integral self rather than out of his fractional self. The man who does not use his heart and will in the gaining of truth is just as faithless as is the man who will not use his mind. Without attempting to use psychological terms with exactness, we may say that Jesus brought in the reign of the practical intellect, which gets truth from all there is of man. Even as truth comes not from the naked will of God, nor yet out of his cold thought, but rather out of the full nature of the Infinite, so truth finds man, not at some one point of his being, but in the glowing center of his whole life.

We may assert, also, that the Bible saves education from frigidity. Tennyson speaks of "the freezing reason's colder part." We all know the meaning of the phrase. Jesus put into the search for truth the mood of humility. The method of learning was obedience. Obedience is the organ of intellectual vision as well as of spiritual vision. The method of Jesus was not merely for the spiritual life, as men speak in their fragmentary way; it was a universal method. It takes humility to make the beginnings of a scholar, and weariness and shame of ignorance, and faith in an intellectual empire, and a high trust that the mind is made for truth, and the truth for mind. Ere we have done, we have a huge creed wrapped up in our intellectual processes. But the creed has been saved from its cold pride. The Bible says in one of its marginal readings, "Knowledge puffeth up; love buildeth up." Knowledge alone may be swollen with pride, and the higher demand of the Bible would save from that disaster. This gives us the clue to more than one biblical sentence. There is a "science falsely so called." There is a sense in which "not many wise after the flesh are called." These implied warnings are not the cries of prejudice. They stand for the effort to touch learning with humility, which alone can save it from being distant and icy. [Pg 122]

The good Book rescues education from a selfish inaction. There was a living and serving element in Jesus's relation to the intellectual life. He did not deal in barren

metaphysics or in helpless abstractions. His truth went to work. He fastened it to life's burdens, and they were lifted. He dropped it amid life's problems, and they were solved. He cast it against life's temptations, and they were defeated. He attached it to life's duties, and they were fulfilled. He sought those truths with which men had to dwell. He never attempted to set forth the essential mystery of things. He was no dealer in an intellectual cure-all. He spoke with authority and yet with reverent limitation. There was a great reserve in his explanations. Yet in the realm where men must live their present lives, Jesus gave enough truth to keep men busy all their days. Here again comes in the question of dynamic. Men sometimes prate about their "love of truth." The intellectual life, like the religious life, may be guilty of cant. It takes more than an open mind to get the truth; it takes a working mind. Truth does not come to the passive man by way of transfer. One teaching of the parable of the virgins is that, while the coarser goods of life may be transferred, the finer goods of life must be won by spiritual effort. It takes dynamic to secure a real intellect. Perception may see a truth, but only inward power can use the truth. Jesus conferred that power. He gave us the truth in the doctrine about God. He gave us the way in the spirit of obedience. He gave us the life in the willingness to make the truth the servant of the world for the sake of Christ. [Pg 123] [Pg 124]

This leads us to the biblical idea of consecrated intellect. As we have often failed to indicate the sin of needless ignorance, so have we failed to point out the sin of an unconsecrated mind. All truth can be dedicated to Christ. His great call to-day is for more men with the highest culture placed under the thrall of his grace and under the guiding power of the Spirit whom he sends—more Luthers from Wittenberg, more Wesleys from Oxford, more Pauls from Gamaliel's school; more men from all our modern seats of learning who will know that gifts of learning can be placed at the service of the King and that all science and philosophy and literature may be placed at the foot of the Cross. In the coming day of the Christian intellect

> Mind and heart, according well
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster.

CHAPTER V

[Pg 125]

The Bible and Work

The frank purpose of the present lecture is to discuss the relation of the Bible to the moral and spiritual aspects of work. The aim is not a study in economics. Without doubt the Bible stands for justice; and without doubt, also, the intent of the Bible is to make just men. But the great Book does not give an infallible table of wages; neither does it offer any sure rules whereby we can determine the working value of any particular individual. It declares that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and it leaves the details to be wrought out by men whom it summons to the spirit of justice and love. Interested as we may be in the economic problems of our day, we must still rejoice that the Bible does not surrender its work of inspiration in an effort at mechanical guidance. The wage scale must necessarily vary with the conditions of living; and, therefore, a textbook of money wages would have made a cumbersome volume with most of its

pages as lifeless as the Book of the Dead. The very suggestion ends in ridiculousness. [Pg 126] The effort of the Bible is not to give directions for working machines, but to give motives to working men. It is not a taskmaster, but a task-inspirer.

True toil of whatever sort is in need of inspiration. It must go by system and by schedule, and the element of monotony makes itself felt. The man leaves his home six mornings of the week and takes up his accustomed task. The bell calls him to work at an appointed hour, and it dismisses him by the demand of the clock. The husband goes to the store or office or factory to do the same things again and ever again, while the wife goes about the household duties that have engrossed her on thousands of previous days. One of the victories of life is to be a worker and not to be a drudge. We have all known people who have not won that victory. Their work is a grim necessity. It is not acquainted with poetry or with music. When the idealist speaks of the man who sings at his toil, they sneer at his sentimentalism or they doubt his sincerity. Work is a ceaseless grind; it is a dreary round; it is a hard compulsion. The poet who wields a pen may tell the man who wields a pick that work is joy and refreshment and liberty, but the sour toiler will regard his teacher as a condescending comforter. The complaint of many people is not simply that they must make bricks without straw, but that they must make [Pg 127] bricks at all. In their vocabulary pleasure contrasts with labor because labor itself is pain. They are weary in their work and weary of their work. The only ideal for this sort of laborer is that he may labor so successfully as to be able some day to get on without labor. This man is the drudge.

Oddly enough, he has had his theological partners. There have been Bible students who have held that all work is a penalty of the Fall. They say that when God said to Adam, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," he entered toil among the punishments of life. Undoubtedly sin adds to the hardship of work, especially if the sin be the sin of a wrong attitude. Thorns and thistles do prosper more around the broken gate of the sluggard. The earnest expectation of a groaning and travailing creation does wait for the revealing of the sons of God. Discontent puts its evil reflex on the muscles. The rebellious worker is ever the tired worker. But even the literal story of Eden does not give the ideal of worklessness. Adam had been placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." Wherever God places the man, he places the task for the man. Any other conception of life is unworthy and utterly irreligious. A silly theology that puts a premium on idleness is not born of the God that "worketh hitherto." Still the view that [Pg 128] work is a curse persists even after the theory that encouraged the view has gone to the discard. The sanctified escape the fret of work, but they do not escape its fact. The Perfect Life, as we shall later see, was the life of a Worker.

Admitting, as we all must, that work is sometimes tragic because it lacks its proper outer reward, we may still contend that often its deepest tragedy is a wrong attitude of spirit. Doubtless much of this comes from maladjustment. Some idealists believe that if every man were given his own task, every man would be happy at that task. Kipling so states it in the "L'Envoi" of "The Seven Seas." He sees the good time when there shall be an adjustment between man and his task. The lower motives for work shall all be done away, and the one satisfying motive shall abide.

> And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame,
> And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
> But each for the joy of the working, and each in his separate star,
> Shall draw the thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are.

Ideal as this is, it gets a response from us all. Besides there are some foretokens of this [Pg 129] age of joyful toil. Usually these are seen most clearly in work that has a relation to beauty. The woman works cheerfully at her fine embroidery, and she works just as cheerfully over the flowers in her garden. With men the form of toil that stands for

genuine achievement often becomes not only a pleasure but a veritable passion. Where a spiritual motive allures, work frequently becomes the gladness of life. Agassiz declined to accept the remunerative call to lecture by saying, “I am only a teacher. I cannot afford to make money.” Wesley poured back into his work all the results of his work and died a poor man whereas he might have become rich. In America college professors have been known to save their meager salaries in order that they might return their slight estates to endow more fully the institutions for which they labored. They received from their work so that they could give back to their work.

The more we study cases of this fine sort, the more will we be impressed that the workers labored under the biblical sense of life. The men just mentioned were all profound believers in God, and they lived their lives as under his eye. Hence they saw their portion of work as a part of the infinite whole that makes for the kingdom of God. There is a story of a workingman who, standing on the street opposite the Cathedral of [Pg 130] Cologne, was overheard saying, “Didn’t we do a fine job over there?” Turning about, the listener saw a rough hand pointing at the wonderful cathedral. “What did you do?” he asked the man. The reply was, “I mixed the mortar for several years.” The tale was told by the thoughtless as being humorous. It is, however, serious and beautiful. That workman had gotten the vision of himself as a partner in a plan that covered centuries of grand toil. He was a helper of God in the fashioning of his temple. In reality he had joined the company of Hiram and of Solomon. Now all honest work must have a direction that is both long and high. It reaches down into the years of men. It reaches upward into the heart of God. Precisely this idealism is needed in order that toil may be redeemed from its drudgery. George Eliot gives us a striking illustration of it in her tribute to Stradivari, the maker of violins. This immortal mechanic is said to have had a reverence for his labor. He felt that, whereas God gave men skill to play, God depended on Stradivari to furnish the instruments. He was the partner of the Most High. God had chosen Stradivari as a helper. Hence he could say,

God be praised, [Pg 131]
Antonio Stradivari has an eye
That winces at false work and loves the true,
With hand and arm that play upon the tool
As willingly as any singing bird
Sets him to sing his morning roundelay,
Because he likes to sing and likes the song.

We may not all have this attitude toward our work, but we are all idealists enough to wish that we felt just that way. The singing workman is not altogether a figment of the imagination; neither is his spirit impossible in the day that now is. The men who regard work as a blessing, and not as a penalty and a curse, are found in many trades and professions. They are the forerunners of the Eden life. Certainly the main teaching of the Bible, that labor is designed to aid in the bringing in of the kingdom of God, must give to the honest laborers in every realm an exalted joy.

This primary consideration is joined by the human examples of the Bible. We find in its pages a procession of workers, and from this procession God selects many of his chosen leaders. Moses was tending his flock on the hillside when the voice of the Lord summoned him to his manifold leadership. Saul was seeking his father’s cattle when he found the kingdom of which he was to be king. David was busy in the sheepfold when the prophet called him to his work as warrior and monarch. Ruth was gleaning in the [Pg 132] fields, in her pathetic effort to care for her widowed mother-in-law and herself, when she found her way into happiness and into the ancestry of our Lord. Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press when he was drafted for the campaign that was to break the power of the Midianites. Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when

the mantle of Elijah was cast over his shoulders. Nehemiah was serving as cupbearer to the king when he evoked from Artaxerxes the permission to return and rebuild the walls of his beloved city. Amos was among the herdsmen of Tekoa when the word of God took him captive and sent him to his prophetic career. These are the instances in the Old Testament where mention is made of the form of toil from which God called men to some spiritual service. Without doubt the full record would show that other signal servants received their commissions while they were faithfully performing their duties on threshing floors, out in the fields, and within counting-rooms.

The New Testament is less specific in its descriptions, but it often gives us the like hint. Matthew was at the seat of custom when he was invited into the fellowship of the disciples that he might tell men of the eternal exchange. James and John were engaged in their occupation as fishermen when they heard the voice on the shore and pulled [Pg 133] their boat over the blue waves that they might become fishers of men. The shepherds were in faithful watch over their flocks by night when they heard the evangel of song and were startled by the message of peace. The illustrations make us feel that the favorite meeting place of God with man is the meeting place of man with his work. A motto says that "the best reward of good work is more good work to do." The providence of God upholds the motto. The Bible shows a preference for the workers as against the shirks. It puts the premium on industry, whether the type of toil be manual or spiritual.

Here, as in all other themes of real life, we come to Christ for our highest teaching and our best example. We have noted elsewhere that he made the home the illustration of our relations with God; and we now note that he made the common work of earth the illustration of our responsibility for service to God. This he did so often and so urgently that we are driven to feel that work was not only the form of illustration but also the form of service itself. How many parables did he gain from the ways of toil? He would say, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto—," and straightway his hearers' minds were sent to the places where men wrought for their daily bread. In most places the blanks [Pg 134] can be supplied by some form of employment. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto—" a merchant and his pearls; a sower and his field; a woman and her leaven; a fisherman and his net; a husbandman and his vineyard; a merchant traveler and the intrusted talents. Where his words were used as deft and quick illustrations rather than as lengthy and formal parables, he gathered his material from the realms of toil. The builder and the house; the shepherd and the sheep; the axman and the tree; the tailor and the cloth; the housewife and the coin; the rich man and his steward; the woman and her grinding; the man and his plowing; the watchman and his vigil; the husbandman and the vine; all these entered into his speech as showing what God would expect of men. Here we have almost a cyclopedia of labors. Inasmuch as Jesus commended the qualities shown in these various phases of service, we are allowed to think that he regarded the legitimate occupations of everyday life as both representing and fulfilling the kingdom of God. Nor will reverent thought be satisfied with any less comprehensive view. There would be a dread of living if we were made to feel that the work which we must do, both to meet our own sense of self-respect and to provide for the needs of ourselves and our [Pg 135] beloved, was either in opposition to the grace of God or stood for neutral territory between the realms of good and evil. The teaching of Jesus saves us from that practical atheism. He allows every honest man to take the oft-repeated phrase, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto—," and to complete a portion of its meaning from his own form of labor. If a man is engaged in any task that makes sacrilege and blasphemy when it is used to fill out the sentence, then let that man look well to his own heart and life. Every man's work should serve as a parable of Christ.

But Jesus was not simply the doctrinaire of toil; he was its exemplar. The emphasis here is usually placed upon the fact that Christ was a carpenter. He transformed crude

materials into useful tools. An overdone stress on this point is itself a confession that manual toil needs an apologist! The significant thing is that such a stress is wholly absent from the speech and attitude of Jesus. With him carpentry seems to have been a natural part of life. He never refers to it as something that he had outgrown. His backward look toward the occupation of his youth betrays no condescension, like to that occasionally seen in so-called self-made men! After he had left the carpenter's bench he said, "I work." When he saw the night closing down about him, the brevity of [Pg 136] the working day became an incentive to more work, and he said, "I must work." Even in the agony we can catch the exultation of the cry, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." It was his meat to finish his "work." Jesus did the appointed task for each period of his life. Then he passed on to the task of the next period without the least hint that the varying tasks were not joined in the harmony of the divine purpose. The work of his life was like his garment; it was all of one piece. From the building of the Nazareth cottage on to the building of the "many mansions," there is no consciousness of contradiction. With Jesus the working life was a unity.

And at the risk of being mechanical in the use of bungling divisions we may declare that Jesus entered into all the large divisions of toil. The note of universality is seen here as it is seen elsewhere. We have been told that the three forms of temptation that Jesus encountered on mountain top and temple pinnacle exhaust all the types. It has been said, too, that the thankfulness of Jesus is directed toward all the channels by which the good of life can flow in upon us. This same characteristic of universality appears in the work of Christ. As a carpenter he worked upon material things. As a [Pg 137] healer he worked upon the bodies of men. As a teacher he worked upon the minds of men. As a preacher he worked upon the souls of men. All the workers of the world can be brought into one of these divisions, and so all true workers can enter into partnership with Jesus. We call him the Carpenter, the Great Physician, the Greatest Teacher, the World's Saviour! The manual toilers claim him. The doctors claim him. The teachers claim him. The evangelists claim him. He is at home in the shop, in the hospital, in the schoolroom, and in the temple. All the classes of toilers can appeal to the sanction of his example.

Still we must again assert that these clumsy divisions were not emphasized by Jesus himself. There has been an age-long debate, ofttimes degenerating into a wrangle, as to the relative hardships of the different forms of labor. Men who cling to their occupations will still declare that those occupations have trials beyond all others. Into this debate Jesus did not enter. He never set one form of toil against another by entering into any comparisons or contrasts. As he experienced all the general forms of labor, so did he honor all forms. In his view they were all good and all cooperative. On the surface they may seem to be rivals, but in the center they are actual partners in the [Pg 138] divine program. Hence Jesus passed from one realm of work to another with little sense of transition. Carpenter, Healer, Teacher, Preacher, he was ever the servant of the Kingdom. Faithfulness, honor, industry, efficiency, patience—in short, all the virtues were possible in any good way of work. The life of Jesus unites all our types of labor in a divine purpose and rebukes that quarrelsome spirit which so often sets the manual laborers and the mental and moral laborers in opposition. The hand cannot say to the head, "I have no need of thee," nor can the head utter the like speech of egotism and self-sufficiency. The workers are all one body, and every one members of another.

So do we find Jesus putting himself with willing sacrifice into his varying tasks. He had said to his parents in Jerusalem, "Wist ye not that I must be amid my Father's matters?" and then he went into what men call the silent years. But they were not wholly silent. The attentive can hear the sound of the hammer. The point is that in passing from the Jerusalem temple to the Nazareth shop Jesus did not depart from his Father's business. We may all resent the particular descriptions of the quality of his

work as a carpenter; and we may be quite content in our faith that all his work was done faithfully and well. Holman Hunt's "Shadow of the Cross" relates Jesus's work in the shop to his sacrificial character. At the end of a weary day the Nazareth Carpenter extends his arms to relieve his weariness. The sunshine coming through the window casts his shadow on the wall in the form of a Cross. His mother glancing in through another window sees the Cross foreshadowed there and gets her glimpse of the sword that should enter her own heart. Nor did Jesus escape hardship and exhaustion when he became a healer and teacher of the people. The crowds thronged him wherever he went. The hillside became like an open-air hospital. The multitudes hung upon his words of instruction. Some have said that one reason why he commanded men who were healed or who were told the deeper secret of his nature that they "should tell no man," was that he might avoid the greater press of the throngs. Be that as it may, we are surely justified in saying that he gave himself lavishly to the work of each period. In each section of his life his action said, "I must work." [Pg 139]

It would be easy, however, to overstate Jesus's relation to work. He did not labor all the time. Knowing how to toil he knew likewise how to rest. Men may plead the example of Satan against a vacation season, but they cannot plead the example of Christ! He rested after he had worked and in order that he might work again. When the crowd became importunate and the drain upon his power had become severe, he sought the desert and in its quiet restored himself for the new labors. He bade his weary disciples to come apart to the spot of respite. He was the exemplar of proper rest even as he was the exemplar of proper work. Industrious men often need one lesson even as lazy men need the other. There are persons who are greedy of toil. They are as avaricious for it as the miser is for gold. They are what Carlyle would call "terrible toilers." They die before their time because they work after their time. Jesus knew this danger. He wished to guard against it by keeping the Sabbath for man. He wanted to save the resting place between the weeks because he wanted to save man to his best self and work. He prescribed the working day and the shop, and he prescribed the resting day and the desert. [Pg 140]

We need not be surprised, then, to find that the new day puts the emphasis on the sanctification of common work. Professor Peabody gives the contrast between two well-known poems as illustrating a change that has come over the personal side of the social question. A generation since Lowell gave us his "Vision of Sir Launfal." The hero of this poem, after traveling in many lands, finally finds the holy grail in the cup which he had filled for a way-side beggar, while the more personal presence of Jesus is discovered in the beggar himself to whom the searcher has given alms. The characteristic of the new day is seen in Van Dyke's "The Toiling of Felix." The hero of this later poem, after seeking the direct vision of his Lord in caves and deserts of idle contemplation, at last secures the coveted revelation as he enters gladly into a life of toil and particularly as he flings himself into the swollen river to rescue a fellow laborer. Felix finds that there is a holy literalness in the words which he found on the piece of papyrus as a recovered gospel of Christ: [Pg 141]

> Lift the stone, and thou shalt find me;
> Cleave the wood, and there am I.

The ranks of labor are "the dusty regiments of God." The Lord, being a worker, is mindful of his own:

> Born within the Bethlehem manger where the cattle round me stood,
> Trained a carpenter of Nazareth, I have toiled and found it good.

The good work of the world is the work of Christ. There is really no contrast between sacred and secular; the actual contrast is between the sacred and the wicked. [Pg 142]

They who tread the path of labor, follow where Christ's feet have trod,
They who work without complaining, do the holy will of God.
. . . . . .
This is the Gospel of labor—ring it, ye bells of the kirk,
The Lord of Love came down from above to live with the men who work.

The inevitable drift of this emphasis on the working experience of Jesus has swept admiration away from the monastic life. The "religious" are not those who shun the world of toil in order that they may gain the world of personal peace and salvation. The modern saint is not a Simon the Stylite. Saint Francis of Assisi projects himself into the admiration of the twentieth century because he was a worker rather than a recluse. The attitude toward monasticism among the healthier and more energetic peoples goes further than this: there is a feeling that in the last analysis the religious hermit is spiritually selfish. That is deemed a poor kind of religion which forsakes a world in order to save one's soul. The argument that the recluses may render the world the service of constant prayer does not appeal to those who know that work is itself a form of prayer; and that in Jesus prayer and work lived together in harmony. A better understanding of the religion of Christ demands that its followers shall be socially efficient. If Jesus is to be the world's example, more and more men and women will find in their legitimate toil one of the sacraments of life.

[Pg 143]

Already we have come to feel that the Bible doctrine of work, especially as that doctrine is incarnated in Christ, lays stress upon the man as well as upon his task. It asks, "What is the man doing with his work?" It also asks, "What is the work doing with the man?" The reflexes of activity often become a topic of teaching. Paul said that the man reaps the harvest of his own sowing. Jesus said, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." This is much as if he had said that in the upper realms of living action and reaction are equal and in opposite directions. He told his disciples that, if they pronounced the benediction of peace upon a house unfit or unwilling to receive it, the benediction should return to them again. The meaning is that no work done with the right spirit can really fail. The poets give this idea currency. George Herbert declares that a servant with the proper clause in his creed makes "drudgery divine":

Who sweeps a room as to thy law
Makes that and the action fine.

[Pg 144]

He had already implied that such a servant made himself fine. Mrs. Browning emphasizes the need of a serious purpose in work when she uses her picturesque description:

I would rather dance at fairs on tight rope
Till the babies dropped their gingerbread for joy,
Than shift the types for tolerable verse, intolerable
To men who act and suffer. Better far
Pursue a frivolous trade by serious means
Than a sublime art frivolously.

It is "better far" because our seriousness comes back to dwell with us; and our frivolousness does the same. Many of the parables get their meaning from this certainty of reaction. The good shepherd is good because he does his work well, and the return of his work makes him better still. Just as physical work reacts on the muscles, so that sometimes men exercise without any outward object in view, even so does the moral spirit of work come back to dwell with the man and to make his last estate either better or worse. Our bodies are built into strength by a series of reactions, and our spirits evermore receive their own with usury.

This idea, as we have observed in another connection, has wrought some marked changes in the social program. It has largely superseded almsgiving by workgiving. [Pg 145] Scientific charity seeks to remove the causes of poverty, knowing that this is the sure way to remove poverty itself. The conviction is that a day's work with a day's pay is far better for the man than a day's pay without the day's work. In the latter case the man loses both independence and self-respect, while in the former case he keeps both of these and gains in addition the rebound of faithful labor. The tramp, or the man with the heart of a tramp, always fails. Outwitting others, he outwits himself more truly. He plays tricks on his own soul. The weakness of his life settles back into his spirit. He drags with him always his evasions and neglects. Scamping his toil, he scamps his own soul. All shoddy material gets built into his own being. He erects a dishonest house for another, but with it he erects an evil structure in which he himself must live. So it is that a man's work may be his blessing, or it may be his vengeance.

While this idea has its terrible side, it has also its side of glory and comfort. It provides amply for the failure of the faithful. Goldsmith says that "Good counsel rejected returns to enrich the giver's bosom," just as Jesus says the declined benediction of peace comes back to the true disciple. It follows that for the good workman there is no real [Pg 146] failure. The house that he has builded may go up in smoke and flame, but the industry and honor that fashioned its walls and fashioned themselves in the making of the walls cannot be destroyed. The fortune that he has gathered may take wings and fly away, but the deeper treasures that have been garnered by fair-dealing in the marketplace abide in the deposit of the heart. Jesus said, "Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." We see here that there are possessions that human power cannot remove. They have been woven into the self. The treasure house is too deep for the touch of man. A minor poet tells us:

> I've found some wisdom in my quest
> That's richly worth retailing;
> I've found that when one does his best
> There's little harm in failing.

He corrects this mild statement in his concluding verse. He wanted riches, but he was rich without them; he wanted to sound the depths with his philosophy, but his ship sailed on anyhow; he wanted fame; but he discovered the secret of greatness without it; and so he adds the lines which declare that the failing of the faithful not only does "little harm," but even that it furnishes its own enrichment of the real life:

> I may not reach what I pursue, [Pg 147]
> Yet will I keep pursuing;
> Nothing is vain that I can do;
> For soul-growth comes from doing.

David "does well" that it is in his heart to build the Lord's house, even though the honor be passed on to another. The good purpose helps to make the good man; and the good purpose that expresses itself in work is sure of the inner reward. This conception may be twisted into a soft gospel for the inefficient; but the evident purpose of the Bible is to offer it as a comforting gospel for the faithful.

It would be easy to follow the guidance of the Concordance as it notes the word "work" in the Epistles. All of the conceptions that have thus far been treated reappear in the apostolic writings. The symbol of everyday work is constantly lifted to the highest. We do not need to see Paul bending over the sailcloth and thrusting his needle into the canvas ere we know that he is a worker. His whole life was one of toil. He was not slothful in his apostolic business; and the fervor of his spirit would have been a good example to the ancient mechanic or merchant. He saw good men as his colaborers with

God. He saw the men that he helped to make good as a husbandry that he was cultivating for the Lord, as a building that he was fashioning for Christ's sake. The cure [Pg 148] for thieving was work. He that stole was to steal no more, but was to work with his hands the thing that was good; and the benevolent motive was to impel to work that the former thief might have something to give to the needy. It was of the hard toil of servants that Paul said, "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." It is the idea of reaction again; God suffers no faithful worker to lose his reward. The apostolic rule is very thoroughgoing in dealing with laziness. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." This rule may be an offense to the idle rich, but it appeals to the sense of justice. Perhaps some day society will be skillful enough to starve its tramps and shirks until they flee to toil as to a refuge.

It is peculiar that the end of the Bible should have been misconceived, even as the beginning, in its teaching concerning work. We have discussed the heresy that declares that work is a penalty of sin. There is another heresy which pictures heaven as a place of everlasting idleness. If we select certain of the descriptions of Revelation, it is easy to see how the error arose. Yet in each of the weird pictures of the eternal city there is one sentence at least that hints at heavenly service. For energetic souls no other conception will be satisfying. Surely inactivity is not the goal of a redeemed race. [Pg 149] Shortly before his death Mark Twain published in a magazine a satire on the usual idea of heaven. Introduced in a dream to the city of our hope, he was told by an attending angel to take his seat on a cloud and to occupy himself by wearing a crown and holding a harp. Soon becoming weary of this do-nothing life, he came down to the golden streets. He was asked to keep for a time the crowns and harps of the passers-by, and he noted that the way was strewn with these rejected ornaments! Some good people may have been offended by the satire; and some whose life has been filled with weariness will insist that heaven must offer rest. So indeed it must. One suggestive passage says concerning the souls of those that were slain for the testimony of Christ that they should "rest yet for a little season." Those that have come out of great tribulation are given service as a reward of their tribulation. "Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple." In the later description the land of rest is seen as a land of work, and "his servants shall serve him." The race does not look back to a workless Eden; neither does it look forward to a workless heaven. Kipling puts it well for either here or there:

> We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it, [Pg 150]
> Lie down for an eon or two,
> Till the Master of all good workmen
> Shall set us to work anew.

The ideal of the Bible is service, and that ideal is not rejected when life comes to its crowning.

One of the great hymns of the church gives to the worshipers in a sanctuary the Bible's Gospel of Work:

> Yet these are not the only walls
> Wherein thou mayst be sought;
> On homeliest work thy blessing falls
> In truth and patience wrought.
>
> Thine is the loom, the forge, the mart,
> The wealth of land and sea;
> The worlds of science and of art,
> Revealed and ruled by thee.

Then let us prove our heavenly birth
In all we do and know,
And claim the kingdom of the earth
For thee, and not thy foe.

Work shall be prayer, if all be wrought
As thou wouldst have it done;
And prayer, by thee inspired and taught;
Itself with work be one.

The biblical ideal for earth sends men forth to their daily tasks, while the biblical ideal for heaven breaks its reserve sufficiently to show us a City wherein the saints at rest are likewise the saints at work.

CHAPTER VI

[Pg 151]

The Bible and Wealth

The word "wealth" as used in this discussion does not mean simply great riches; it rather means those outer and visible means which have a certain purchasing power and which gain their value from that fact. The word is relative at best. A wealthy man of fifty years ago would by many be deemed a poor man now; while, in the individual estimate, one man's poverty would be another man's riches. We have all discovered, too, that persons may be tested by their attitude toward little as well as by their attitude toward much. The man who breaks down in his use of a thousand dollars is not likely to recover his conscience in his use of a million dollars. There is high authority for the belief that he that is faithful in a few things can be trusted with rulership over many things. This principle will apply to riches quite as well as to cities. We must necessarily take at large discount the vigorous attack that is made on great wealth by the man who is narrow and selfish in his use of moderate wealth. One ray of light falling into a dark dungeon will test a man's attitude toward light; and so the real personal attitude toward one coin may become the revelation of a human heart.

[Pg 152]

All of us must live within the realm of material endeavor. Six days of the week are given by the average man in an effort to win worldly goods. If, as is generally supposed, Jesus went back from the temple scene in Jerusalem when he was twelve years of age and worked in the village carpenter shop until he was thirty, he spent eighteen years in a remunerative employment ere he entered upon the three years of public ministry. It is a mechanical conception again; but it is interesting to observe that the proportion of his years spent in his trade is the same six sevenths of the time that most men must spend in the effort to gain the necessaries or luxuries of life. One has only to stand on the streets of the city in the early morning and see the throngs as they move to their places of work to appreciate how large a part the wage motive plays in actual living. Each day many millions of men and women go down to the various marts in order that in the evening time they may come back from the struggle with increased gains. If the Bible takes an attitude toward the spirit that dominates work it must also take an attitude toward the spirit that dominates the object of work. It would be small use to have men made right toward toil if they were to be twisted in their relation to the

[Pg 153]

proceeds of toil. We should expect, then, that the Bible would give some explicit teaching to individual men concerning the right attitude toward wealth; and when we turn to the Holy Book this expectation is fully met.

Beyond this, the social consequences of wealth are manifold and important. To see this point clearly exemplified in a wide field, we have but to study the history of the wars waged by our own nation. At some point every one of these great struggles has been caused by a false relation to wealth. Just where we locate that false relation will depend somewhat upon our prejudices; but the dilemma in each case is such that we are driven to locate it somewhere. The French and Indian War was a military debate as to whether the English or the French should gather the furs in the region of the Upper Ohio and should secure the profits in the world's markets. In the settlement of that issue many lives were sacrificed. The War for Independence was caused by taxes—not, as many people suppose, by a tax on tea alone, but by a long series of taxes covering many years. If the English had a right to levy the tax and if the tax was just, then the colonists [Pg 154] were greedy. If, on the other hand, the Americans refused to pay an unjust tax, inspired in their rebellion by a lofty spirit of liberty, then the English were the greedy party. The War of 1812 was caused by the seizure of our vessels on the French coast and related to freedom of commerce. The dilemma is the same as before. Some one was at fault in that commercial war. A wrong attitude toward property caused the long-drawn-out struggle.

Our later wars show the same form of contest. Historians declare that the war with Mexico was occasioned by the desire to extend slavery territory; by the nation's lust for the enlargement of her borders; and by certain debts owed to citizens of the United States by citizens of Mexico. All of these motives touch somewhere on gold. The Civil War grew from the same "root of all evil." Northern men aided in bringing African slaves to this land in order to turn forced labor into money, while Southern men continued African slavery because it was deemed necessary for the production of cotton. The cry "Cotton is king" was not always spoken above a whisper, but as a slogan it caused some fierce struggling. Boston merchants helped to mob Garrison. The sentiment of England flowed against the North because it was thought that the [Pg 155] abolishing of slavery would demoralize the markets of the world. The hooting crowds that Beecher faced in England were unconsciously influenced to their hostile attitude by a commercial argument. The whole struggle was broadened and heightened until words like "liberty" and "unity" put a moral passion into the fray. But, while the nature of the government and the question of human rights were to be settled, the primary occasion of the contest was commercial.

Nor was the war with Spain any exception to this rule. If we absolve the United States from any motive of greed in our claim that the struggle was purely humanitarian in its character, we must still grant that the heavy taxes assessed against her Western colonies by the Spanish government led to the series of revolutions that occasioned our interference. Thus do we find that somewhere in the heart of each war there was the lurking passion for gold. When we make up the mournful lists of the many thousands whose lives have gone out in these contests, we can debit them against the spirit of greed. Milton in Paradise Lost represents that the rebellion in heaven was caused by the like lust, and that Satan's eyes were ever bent in anxious desire toward the very gold of [Pg 156] the streets! Milton's imagination concerning heaven stands for the historical fact about earth. The demon of greed is usually the demon of war.

The great problems of current national life all trench upon the same influence. If money be not the principal in each of them it comes in as an important confederate. The tariff problem, the currency problem, the canal tolls problem, the trust problem—all these are quickly classified by their names. The cleavage between American political parties for

the last fifty years has been made by a wedge of gold. Tariff, or coinage, or trusts—these have been the large words of political speech. In the problems that have a more apparent moral bearing the same commercial element appears. The Labor Problem is with us quite as acutely as it was with the Romans when long ago the plebeians left the city and camped on the hillsides, leaving the patricians to do their own manual toil. Whether the employer gives too little or the employee asks too much in any given struggle, the demon of greed plays his part again. In the Temperance Problem the case is even clearer. Distillers and brewers and saloonists do not enter their trade because they thereby add either to their social standing or to their moral peace. We cannot eliminate from the problem the factor of the human appetite that craves a stimulant; at [Pg 157] the same time we know that the motive for the business itself comes from the lure of gold. That gleam invites many men into a path which, as they themselves know well, cannot lead to any large political preferment or to any great personal admirations.

The problem of social purity is, of course, related to another human passion. But there has crept into the vocabulary of the people a suggestive phrase, "commercialized vice." There is the general feeling that, if the element of monetary profit could be taken from the loathsome trade, the problem would be much nearer its solution. Hence we have our Red Light Abatement Laws by which we seek to make it dangerous for men to rent their property for the traffic in virtue. On the legal side the present efforts at the solution of the problem all strive to fix a set of conditions, making commercially unprofitable the house of her whose feet take hold on death. If, as is earnestly contended by some, low wages tend to furnish the recruits for the pitiable ranks of the trade in bodies, we have another commercial factor in the campaign. Explain it as we may, it is still true that money makes the unholy alliances. It is no marvel that the Bible has sent down to all the centuries its phrase, "the mammon of unrighteousness."

Of course, many will overstate the case of American greed. The Almighty Dollar is not [Pg 158] our God. Our passing celebrities may be mere millionaires, but our permanent heroes were quite more than traders. If we have seemed more commercial than other peoples it has been because a new continent gave such sweeping opportunities for wealth. Some one has said that it is an evidence of the degeneracy of our period that the word "worth," which once had a noble and inner significance, is now controlled by the market. The fact that the word has gone downhill is taken to mean that the people who use it so have gone downhill too! But these verbal arguments are not reliable. While the word "worth" has dropped somewhat from its old glory, the word "talent," which once had merely a monetary significance, has mounted to a higher meaning. The one word is just as good a witness as the other. The truth is that we meet to-day the world-old problem. The evidence of this lies in the fact that the Bible dealt with the problem in emphatic fashion. It lists for us the victims of greed: Lot, Gehazi, Ananias and Sapphira, Simon Magus, the young ruler, Judas. We shall find in its pages some general principles by which it seeks to warn wealth away from pitfalls and to send it forth to service.

The first of these principles is that God is the only and absolute Owner. Our human [Pg 159] conceit makes for us another theory, and our legal codes write out that theory in complicated formulas. We have our "clear titles" and our "quitclaim deeds." Formal records at a courthouse tell men that we "own" houses and lands, while formal certificates assert our right to so many shares of stock or so much value in bonds. The Bible confronts our complacency with its plea for the ownership of Another. God has the only clear titles! God has never put his signature to a quitclaim deed! The courthouse record is a temporary convenience; the higher record gives the eternal fact. "The silver and the gold" are God's. "The cattle on a thousand hills" are God's. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." There is here not merely the assertion of a property ownership, but an assertion of the

ownership of the very men who think that they own the property! The sea and the land are the possessions of God. So spiritual a prelude as that to the Gospel of John claims a divine dominion, while many words could be quoted from both Testaments which make God the one august Possessor. The history of all our materials leads us back to God alone. He fashioned the wood in the forests. He stored the coal and iron in the [Pg 160] hills. He packed the fertility in the soil. When we look for the source of the medium of exchange we must go back of men to God himself. We pursue the gold coin to the bank, and then to the mint, and then to the mine, only to hear the silent proclamation of the gold itself that it is of God. When congregations sing:

> All things come of thee, O God,
> And of thine own have we given thee,

it is not an instance of poetic license in reverence; it is sober fact expressed in worship.

The claim of the Bible for the divine ownership is still more comprehensive. All property is his; all men are his. There is, too, a bent of human power which God confers. We are in the habit of speaking of "gifted" men. The meaning of the word in its usual connection must be that God gives certain powers to men—to one the power of poetry, to another the power of moving speech, and to another the power of scientific and inventive insight. Now there is a suggestive verse in Deuteronomy which declares that it is the Lord God that "giveth thee power to get this wealth." The "thee" is collective and refers to the people; but the rule applies as well to the individual. There is no reason for supposing that poetic genius or oratorical genius or inventive genius is [Pg 161] a gift, while financial genius is an achievement. Yet there are probably no men who are more inclined to call themselves "self-made" than are the men who pass from poverty into vast wealth. Their complacency would be diminished, and their humility would be increased, if they perceived that all property belongs to God, that they themselves belong to God, and that their "power to get this wealth" comes from God. We find, then, that the first sweeping principle which the Scriptures give concerning wealth is that God is its inclusive and ceaseless owner.

The second principle follows as a matter of course. God being the absolute owner, man is a trustee, a lessee, a borrower. When the man in the New Testament asked, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" he may not have reached a worthy definition either of "lawful" or of "mine own." He may have deemed a loan a final gift, a lease a purchase, a possession a creation, a stewardship an ownership. It is just this error that more than any other leads to the abuse of wealth. We treat it as "personal property," and the "personal" looks selfward rather than Godward. This was the blunder of the foolish rich man. His ground brought forth plentifully. His crops could not be crowded into his granaries. He resolved to tear down his barns and to build [Pg 162] greater. He told his soul to eat, drink, and be merry, for that it had much goods laid up for many years. Then came the sentence of eviction. In a moment the man discovered that he was a tenant and not an owner. "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" This is the question that every man of means must ask. Wills are never shrewd enough to secure the property for the dead. Jesus said that the man who acted on the idea that wealth was his own was a "fool." He missed the primary point of the divine ownership, and he missed the secondary point of the human trusteeship. All his work was based on impossibilities; and surely this is the supreme foolishness.

This lesson is impressed upon men when they return to their former places of residence after an absence of many years. They recall who "owned" yonder house, yonder farm, yonder lot, yonder block. The old "owners" are gone, and the new "owners" have come. Changes of apparent ownership have been entered in the civil records; but these in their turn will be changed. The procession of trustees moves down through the millenniums; above the trusteeships is one changeless Owner. "We brought nothing

into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"—this is the surest of edicts. [Pg 163]
It is said that one of the wealthiest of men in our nation called his wife to his bedside just before he passed away and asked her to sing to him, "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy." The man knew that in a few moments he would be stripped of every earthly possession. It was a pungent reply made when one man asked another how much a certain rich man had left—"All he had!" was the response. Even so. Whenever any person shall make a stout claim for his ownership of property, it is a wholesome lesson if he be asked to postpone the discussion for a hundred years!

The law of giving is compulsory. We may defer surrender, but we cannot avoid surrender. The hand may grasp for fourscore years, but its final act will be to "let go" of every earthly object. The loan must be returned. The trusteeship must be dissolved. The lease must be transferred. The account must be rendered. Directly all that remains of the gold is the reflex of gold. We may decide when to give, to what to give, in what spirit to give; but we may not decide whether we shall give. There is lasting truth in the much-quoted epitaph: "What I spent I had. What I saved I left behind. What I gave away I took with me." In this respect the whole problem of life is the problem of a [Pg 164]
faithful stewardship. This is the teaching of what we may call the commercial parables. We are responsible for the use of our talents and pounds to an authority higher than our own. The trustees pass away. The Owner abideth forever.

The third biblical principle declares that this stewardship is attended by grave temptations. For a hasty reading the New Testament judgment will seem like a reversal of the Old Testament judgment. The ancient record often traces a relation between piety and prosperity. Jacob's proposal at Bethel reads like a bargain struck in the market place. The book of Job was meant to correct this error and to drive from the world those needless suspicions that would be directed against the sick and the poor. In the vigorous debate with his friends the patriarch declines to plead guilty to the charge that his bodily ills and property losses are the results of his sins. But although the commercial value of piety may often be found among Old Testament motives, still there is a constant offset. The period of plenty is described as accompanied by a "leanness of soul." The deeper insight of the psalmist saw the end of the man "who made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches." Then there stood [Pg 165]
before him the perplexing sight of prosperous wickedness, the bad man spreading himself as the green bay tree and having everything that heart could wish. Slowly the artificial nexus that had been fashioned between piety and prosperity and wickedness and misfortune was broken, and men began to seek for the different types of reward in their own fields. More stress was laid upon the methods by which wealth was gained, and more upon its charitable uses. The prophets came to thunder against a false outer prosperity and to give their advance hints of the wealth of the kingdom of God.

In its warnings the New Testament is still more emphatic. The word "riches" becomes most often a symbol of the higher wealth of spirit. It is made over into deeper meaning. Besides, the early Christian leaders saw the enticing dangers of wealth. Visits to Ephesus or Corinth or Rome made them see how multitudes could be caught in the snare of riches, while examples among the Jews gave them the same lesson with a personal emphasis. There were likewise some concrete illustrations of a most forbidding kind. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The lust of the treasury had betrayed him ere he betrayed his Lord. The first persecution of the Christian Church was caused by greed. It is written, "And when her masters saw that the hope of [Pg 166]
their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers." Soon the two missionaries are beaten with rods and are taken to the inner prison. The second persecution of the church was caused by the same spirit of greed. Demetrius, the silversmith, makes his appeal to his fellow-craftsmen: "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at

Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that ... this our craft is in danger to be set at naught." As is the custom of men with the commercial heart, he lifted the issue to a specious height and made his plea for Diana of the Ephesians!

With the memory of Christ's betrayal and of the first two persecutions of their brethren fresh in their memories, it is no marvel that the New Testament writers began to stress the perils of greed. The work of Luke as a physician had doubtless given him an intense sympathy with the poor, and his Gospel records eagerly our Lord's warnings to the rich. James in his Epistle fairly bristles with indictments against the rich. He asks: "Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they [Pg 167] blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" When he wrote thus did he have visions of Ephesus and Philippi? Later he breaks into violence, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." The later verses indicate that he saw their injustice to the poor laborers and heard the cries which these poor had sent "into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Severe as the indictment is, we can see how it was prompted by memory as well as by scenes of recent greed. Moreover, we have all known modern cases to which the language would apply. If the Bible is to be complete, it must give room to such indignant words as these.

The records would show that Paul included among his friends men and women of worldly means; still his words of chiding and warning are not withheld. He writes of a "cloak of covetousness." He had seen men don that cloak—by their paltry excuses for withholding gifts; by their effort to make an intent for the future stifle a present cry for help; by a deft transfer of income to principal which "must not be disturbed"; by the [Pg 168] plea that luxuries were necessities; by a recital of past generosities; by setting one good cause against another. All these modern cloaks Paul doubtless found in the wardrobes of long ago. He carries the charge against covetousness on until he identifies it with heathenism. He writes of the "covetousness which is idolatry," and in yet another place he speaks of the "covetous man who is an idolater," as if he wished to make the charge personal. Idolatry is the worship of something less than God. When, therefore, any man bows down to idols of silver and gold erected in banks rather than by temple altars, he joins the ranks of the idolatrous. He may be even worse than those idolaters who strive to reach beyond their hideous images if haply they may feel after God and find him. These words of Paul are urgent warnings that covetousness may destroy personal genuineness and may defeat spiritual worship. Greed may shut us away from both man and God.

But the apostle's strongest word is given in his counsel to Timothy, a young man whose ideals he would seek to mold. We can imagine the impression the advice made upon the susceptible youth when he read Paul's letter in rich and worldly Ephesus. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all [Pg 169] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." It is a modern account again. The twentieth century has already given thousands of illustrations of the same apostasy. As for the wide statement that "the love of money is the root of all evil," we have but to review these pages to find the commentary. Every item in the catalogue of crimes finds a partner in greed. Intemperance, lust, war, thieving, murder, betrayal, persecution, untruthfulness—all these grow from the root of greed. No heedless joking about the "root" can vacate the language or permit "the love of money" to declare its innocence.

In addition to these positive statements sprinkled throughout the Book, there is a negative testimony that may well be given a hearing. If we were to search the pages for warnings against poverty we would find that the search was difficult and that it met with slight returns. The prayer of Agur in the book of Proverbs is, perhaps, the only assured instance. He pleads: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God." There is here a [Pg 170] recognition of the peril of discontent in poverty, as well as of the peril of dishonesty, and the peril of a blasphemous indictment against God. We may take the warning at its full value. Some people of every age will need its plain speaking. But what shall we say of the biblical idea of the peril of wealth, when its chapters yield many scores of warnings as contrasted with this lonely warning about poverty? It would seem permissible to paraphrase a Bible comparison of persons and to say that poverty has slain its thousands but wealth its tens of thousands! Even this comparison falls short, if we measure it by the biblical proportion of teaching. The silence of the Bible gives us here a significant lesson.

We now approach the supreme authority in the teaching and example of Jesus. The elective method here will give a man the result he most wishes. The boisterous agitator can make choice of passages that will serve his harsh purpose, while the defender of his own unconsecrated surplus may quote us passages that give him great comfort. The one will tell us of Jesus's words to the young ruler; of his command against laying up treasures on earth; and of a hard-and-fast interpretation of the parable of Dives and Lazarus. The other will tell us of the praise bestowed on successful traders; of the [Pg 171] inclusion of the wealthy among Christ's friends and disciples; and of the law of the larger returns for the larger powers and larger industry so plainly enunciated in the parables of the talents and the pounds. The fragmentary method leads here to confusion and to the wildest partisanship. The teaching of Jesus must be taken in its completeness.

That teaching must, also, be judged by the attitude of Jesus toward men. The well-to-do were in his band of disciples. The father of John and James had servants; and when Jesus died on the Cross John had evidently a comfortable home to which the mother of Jesus was taken. Nicodemus was rich. Yet in his conversation with him Christ is not represented as making a demand that the ruler of the Jews should give up his wealth. The demand was far more comprehensive. Zaccheus was rich. But in the table conversation with the publican there is no call to voluntary poverty. Joseph of Arimathea was rich. Still he appears to have been numbered with the disciples and to have had the honor of providing the sepulcher for the body of Christ. All this would make it certain that some of our Lord's teaching was directed toward an individual danger and so was not meant for a universal application. The fact that Peter said to [Pg 172] Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee," does not warrant us in repeating the same words to every man who possesses some wealth. The rebuke was evoked by a personal and peculiar attitude. If the teaching of Jesus, as he dealt with rich men, varied in a marked degree, it is only reasonable to suppose that he was fitting his message to the individual subject. The fallacy of the universal has not yet departed from our treatment of the words of Christ.

But even when we take the whole of Jesus's teaching rather than any fraction thereof, and after we have given full consideration to the personal element in his method, there is still a sobering remainder with which we must deal. The attempt to make the parable of Dives and Lazarus a straight contrast between the final fate of a rich man and that of a poor man cannot succeed. Lazarus was not sent to heaven because he was poor. He was not given a place in Abraham's bosom on the ground of his poverty of circumstances, but on the ground of his wealth of character. Any other conclusion is

abhorrent to the moral sense. Should poverty admit to heaven, some of the most unmitigated rascals are sure to meet the conditions of entrance. Nor was Dives sent to hell because he was rich. The contrast in earthly conditions of which Abraham reminds [Pg 173] him cannot fairly be taken to mean that the reward of poverty is heaven and the penalty of wealth is hell. The meaning is that earthly plenty and earthly want cannot prevent the rounding out of God's purposes. Condition will inevitably come to correspond with real character. Should any rich man be minded to plead with himself that his wealth was, in itself, any evidence that its owner was entitled to special privileges in the next world corresponding to his special privileges in this world, this parable would meet him with its needed corrective.

The command, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal," has been taken by many as a literal command. Usually, however, those who so take it are ready to substitute a theory which would ask the community to break the literal demand by laying up treasures for us. We must read to the end of the passage. Jesus's concern is about the heart. He wishes to establish the direction of the treasure because he knows that in this way the direction of the heart will be established. If money is hoarded with a selfish purpose, the heart goes to selfishness. If money is given for a holy cause, the heart goes into the [Pg 174] cause. On the other hand, if money is saved in order that the provident parent may give his child a better fitness for life, the parental heart is invested in the child. If money is not hoarded at all, but is given for an evil cause, the heart takes that same evil direction. The emphasis of Jesus is spiritual again. The money does something with the heart, and the motive of either saving or giving determines the "heart action." It is the law of action and reaction at work in another realm. Men say that the way to a man's purse is through his heart; and men say well. Jesus, while accepting the statement that there can be no true benevolence that does not come from the heart, still says that often the way to a man's heart is through his purse. It is one of those practical rules whose working we have seen many times. We persuade a man to send his money into a hospital, a college, a library, and his heart follows his money. The terrible thing that Jesus saw in selfish hoarding was just that; and the glorious thing that he saw in generous giving was just that. The good and the evil of earthly treasure is that it fixes the journeys of the heart; it makes a spiritual geography.

There is another word of Jesus about "the deceitfulness of riches." The phrase piques us into a search for its meaning. There is no evidence that Christ meant that riches [Pg 175] deceived us by flying away. The tricks which they play upon men are far more subtle than sudden departure. Jesus meant that riches remained with men and still carried on the deceiving work. We have all seen enough of life to know some of the deceptions. One friend began his business career with the idea that he would be content with a hundred thousand; he is now utterly restless with his million. Another friend gave to worthy causes a far larger proportion of his meager income in the day of struggle than he now gives of his plethoric income in the day of prosperity. Still another friend in the old days was simple and humble in all his attitudes toward life, while in the new days of wealth he has become proud in spirit and complex in his living. We have all seen men whose souls lessened as their riches greatened. All these are illustrations of Jesus's teaching about "the deceitfulness of riches." The tragic thing is that the men who are the victims of the deceitfulness are not aware of the sad inner effects. Men do not know that they are stingy; they are only prudent and economical! So runs the miserable deceit. It requires a moment of marked self-revelation to enable these men to classify themselves with truth. Over the Bank of England men read the words, "The Earth is the [Pg 176] Lord's." This describes the source of wealth. Over many financial institutions it might be good to put another motto as a reminder of a possible effect of wealth, "The Deceitfulness of Riches."

We now face the utterance of Christ with reference to a double mastery over life. He asserts that "no man can serve two masters," without love for the one and hatred for the other. When he seeks for the power that is most likely to contest with God for the allegiance of man he selects Mammon. Hence he states the dilemma without modification, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." He did not select Pleasure as the opponent of God, nor Ambition, nor Impurity, nor Dishonesty. He saw clearly that Mammon had the greatest power to draw men into life-long "service." Other sins might be occasional contestants, but the sin of greed was the constant foe seeking to cleave the loyalty of men. Jesus did not say that we could not serve God with Mammon. Elsewhere he says the very opposite of that. But he did say unequivocally, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Perhaps these six words, more nearly than any other, give us the heart of Jesus's teaching about wealth. They state in simple and direct form the alternatives for many lives. We can serve God *with* Mammon. We can serve God *or* [Pg 177] Mammon. We cannot serve God *and* Mammon. What Christ states as an impossibility many men try to accomplish. We see the vain efforts daily—men putting their greatest diligence into the market place as an end, with an occasional tribute to the temple. This is the most frequent form of the "double life." It is the poor compromise of a half-hearted or tenth-hearted service. Jesus said that God or Mammon must win the whole man. The God and the god cannot dwell in the same heart. Jesus here thrusts us back to the original biblical principle: God is the Absolute Owner. He will not share his rule. He will not partition his empire. Mammon must yield to God. Thus Jesus enters all markets and counting rooms and banks with his demand for undivided hearts and undivided lives.

There is another saying of Jesus which is more frequently quoted, both because it is in itself so radical and because it is accompanied by a vigorous figure of speech. Besides these two attractions, the words have an appealing setting in a human life. The young ruler comes to Jesus with his eager question. He stands before the Lord as a fine type of promising manhood—fresh, alert, clean, and even reverent. He is able to say, without rebuke, that from his youth up he has kept the commandments and that his life has [Pg 178] moved on a high grade of morals. The record tells us that "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." But in this instance, instead of meeting the young man's question with the demand for a new birth, as Jesus did with Nicodemus, or with the acceptance of hospitality, as Jesus did with Zaccheus, Jesus asked that he sell all his goods and give to the poor, and that then he should follow the Lord in his homeless life. Often the comment omits this last demand. It may be that it is the more important demand, and that it is the reason for the minor requirement. Other disciples had left all in order to follow Jesus; and this man was now asked to do likewise. Evidently the teaching here has the individual quality. Christ knew that the young man had set his heart on his riches, and that the only way to a true discipleship was through utter surrender.

We cannot read the story without feeling a measure of sympathy for the young ruler; and we may confess that we ourselves would scarcely have been equal to the severe test. The situation, however, can be estimated in another way—not by our imagination, but by our admiration. Certain men in Christian history have done exactly what Jesus asked this young man to do. John Wesley did it; making much money, he continued to [Pg 179] live on his allowance of twenty-eight pounds a year and gave the rest to a needy world. When he was an old man he wrote to the assessor that his taxable property consisted of two silver spoons at Bristol! Saint Francis of Assisi gave up all his earthly possessions. At the altar of the church he deliberately took poverty as his bride. The heroes of complete renunciation have been many; and the world's verdict has not been that they were fanatics. They heard the call of God that they should surrender all and give to the various kinds of poor; they heeded the command, and they won their fame by their surrender. We can make a more direct test than this. If this young man had heeded Christ's word, and had given all that he had to the poor, and had followed the Lord—

what would have been the result? Would he have won the world's admiration by his self-renunciation? Would he now be known only by the virtually anonymous title of "a certain ruler"? We can see that he was offered a wonderful opportunity. He would have been enrolled among the saints of the early church, if he had risen to the higher choice. An English writer has pointed out that the young man was not angered by the word of Christ; he was "saddened." He went away "sorrowful," and his sorrow was for himself. [Pg 180] He went back to his riches and was lost to the sight of the world. He is now known even anonymously only because he had a brief conversation with One who had not where to lay his head.

Jesus saw the young man's retreating figure and then spoke his own "sorrowful" exclamation, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The account in the Gospel of Mark indicates that the disciples were "amazed" by the saying, just as the men of the world have wondered ever since. Seeing this amazement, Jesus added, "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It was a startling figure of speech—an hyperbole, as the later conversation with the disciples would show, unless, indeed, the saying refers to a certain gate of the city through which only the unburdened camel could enter. This figure of speech has held the attention of the world for centuries. Strangely enough, the nineteenth century had a peculiar illustration of an accommodated meaning of the word "needle." We cannot help wondering what the people of many generations hence would think if they were to read in ancient history that in the latter part of the nineteenth century a certain millionaire paid more than one [Pg 181] hundred thousand dollars for bringing Cleopatra's "needle" to America. Superficial as the suggestion is, it illustrates the manner in which a figure of speech could easily be pulled off into a path of false literalism.

But if we take the view that the expression was either a vivid hyperbole or the description of a local gate, the warning still abides in strength. It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. It is sometimes very hard for him to remain there when his entrance into the kingdom preceded his entrance into wealth. Experienced pastors will tell us that not many wealthy are called. Yet Jesus distinctly declared that the rich could enter into the Kingdom. The disciples, "astonished out of measure," said, "Who, then, can be saved?" Jesus replied, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." It is not right that the man who clamors against the rich should omit this assurance from the teaching. Jesus says that a rich man can be brought into the Kingdom. He offers this as one of the evidences of the divine omnipotence—that the power of God can break through the complacency, the self-content, the tangle of materialism, and can win men from the idolatry of gold to the [Pg 182] love and worship of God.

This message of Jesus to the young ruler, and through him to the world, is not always welcome to the ears of the rich. The religious teacher may be tempted to discount its meaning and to relieve in some way the severity of the words. Yet an age of growing wealth needs this lesson, and needs it with an increased emphasis. The trend of the Bible serves as a commentary on the same lesson. If the Bible is to serve as the book of guidance, then we are justified in saying that the path of material wealth is the path of spiritual peril.

If we halted our lesson here, we should be guilty of a partial use of the Bible. The fourth principle of the great Book is that the stewardship of wealth offers glorious opportunities. It offers the opportunity of aiding the poor. John wrote, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" It offers the opportunity

of caring for the unfortunate, as illustrated in the parable of the good Samaritan. When Jesus uttered this parable, he laid the foundations of many hospitals. It offers the opportunity of paying personal tributes of affection, as exemplified in the offering to [Pg 183] the Lord of the precious ointment. It offers the opportunity of furnishing honest employment as a field of personal fidelity, as taught in the parables of the talents and the pounds. It offers the opportunity of projecting our influence to the ends of the world, as taught by those who aided Paul on his missionary journeys and by those who sent gifts whereby the gospel should be promoted in all the earth. But the Bible does not give any set of rules for the use of wealth. It asserts the primacy of God. It commands the spirit of love. It stresses the probationary character of possessions. It declares in the word of Christ that any man makes a disastrous bargain who gains the whole world and in the transaction loses himself.

Finally Jesus relates our use of money to the eternal issues. He does this in a very simple and direct way, and in the form of an imperative. In the more skilled translation of the Revised Version we read, “Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles.” It appears here that worldly possessions may be either “the mammon of unrighteousness” or the maker of everlasting friendships. By the right use of gold and [Pg 184] silver men can people the gates of heaven with welcomers. “It shall fail,” says Christ, referring to wealth. “They may receive you,” he says, referring to those human lives that are our only permanent investments. The final emphasis of Jesus in giving the very crown of the Bible teaching concerning wealth, great or small, is that his followers shall so use the coin stamped with the image of some earthly Cæsar as to produce in men and women and children the image of the heavenly Lord. The lower commerce is to serve the higher commerce. Faneuil Hall may keep its market place, but it must be subordinated to that upper room wherein men learn the lessons of truth and liberty and righteousness. The Age of Gold can help to make the Golden Age. The problem of wealth will not be solved until all men hold their riches as willing trustees of Him who himself was rich and who for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.

CHAPTER VII

[Pg 185]

The Bible and Sorrow

One who is jealous for the reputation of the Bible as a complete Book of life must sometimes feel that undue emphasis has been placed upon its messages for the sorrowing. If the jealousy does not entertain just this feeling, it has the resembling fear —that the biblical message for sorrow has been emphasized until it has hidden the message for gladness. As a necessary prelude to a discussion of the Bible’s relation to the sorrow of the world, we shall treat its meaning for the world’s gladness. We are willing to use the word “pleasure” in this connection, though pleasure is classed as representing a mood less deep than the mood of joy. Some of us can recall the surprise we experienced in reading Lubbock’s The Pleasures of Life. One chapter dealt with “The Pleasure of Duty.” This title caused us no wonder. But the next chapter astonished us with the heading, “The Duty of Pleasure.” We quickly found ourselves asking

whether there was such a duty. Is it an obligation laid on men and women to seek for a proportion of pleasure? Are the light joys of life to be classed with our duties? Lubbock answered these questions in the affirmative. What reply does the Bible give? [Pg 186]

Certainly we can say in the beginning that, if we take a review of its pages, the Bible does not impress us as being a mournful book. This is significant when we note the fact that its pages were all written by mature and serious persons. Even more, the pages were written with reference to some of the most serious and sacred elements and events in life. Vast solemnities evoked many sections of the Bible. We should expect that the seriousness of the authors and the critical importance of the events would touch the Book and would dominate its spirit. It is even so. Our worthier thought would not have it otherwise. If the Bible had been simply the inspiration and guide for the world's playgrounds, it would have lost the most of its soul.

For a volume whose materials were jokes and whose primary purpose was laughter might have a legitimate mission, but it would have difficulty in being rated as redemptive literature. The real humorist is doubtless one of God's agents in lifting the troubles of mankind; but Providence sees to it that humorists are not so plentiful as to destroy our sense of proportion. Each generation is granted a small group of men who [Pg 187] set the world aglee and become the distributors of smiles and laughter. The appreciation of humor, also, is placed in the nature of each normal person; but the continual demand for humor becomes a plague. Men know instinctively that for the greatest things it will not suffice. There is a story to the effect that one of the most renowned Americans was not allowed to write the Declaration of Independence because it was feared that he might work a joke into the historic document. True or false, the story stands for a fact—that humor is a secondary form of service and that the big crises insist that humor shall stay in its own realm.

None the less the Bible is not a stranger to the play element. As we march through its life we see smiles and hear laughter. Children are there in their careless gladness. Young men and maidens are there in their innocent pleasures. Games are there with their delight of striving. Parties are there with their gayety and music. We pass through pages of darkness only to emerge into pages of sunshine. We sit down at Marah and find the brackish and bitter waters and hear the murmuring of the Israelites. But the next day we come to Elim, with its twelve pure and gushing wells and its threescore [Pg 188] and ten palm trees. This transition is what we would anticipate in a Book of real life, and it is what fits the Bible to be the guide of total life. A joyless book could not control a joyful world; neither could a sorrowless book control a sorrowful world. The Bible must have a message for both types of experience.

There is a theological reason for this twofold message. We have been told by our religious teachers that Christ, being tempted, can succor those that are tempted. The Man of Sorrows can save the people of sorrows. The High Priest is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. He learned obedience through the things he suffered. The world is made acquainted with the sorrowing Saviour of the sorrowing world. Still we have been slow to apply our theology to the other side of life. The forged letter of Publius Lentulus stated that Jesus had often been seen to weep, but never to smile! The mischief of such a misconception is apparent. It provides for a mutilated theology. It gives the world a fractional Christ. It leaves the hour of gladness without its Exemplar. It gives comfort for a funeral, but no companionship for a feast. In the average life the realm of joy is larger than the realm of sorrow. Few people would declare that with them sadness had [Pg 189] exceeded gladness. The world needs to-day the Saviour of the joyful, even as it needs the Saviour of the sorrowful. Joy that refuses to be curbed needs saving power just as does sorrow that refuses to be comforted. We need not enter into any needless

comparison and try to state which has the more need. It is sufficient to affirm that a complete Bible must take account of pleasures and joys, if these are to be counted among the divinely appointed experiences of life.

We do not long study the Bible without becoming aware of its law of proportion. It gives the word in season, and it gives the word in measure. Hence its aim is to cultivate proportion in human lives. Its ideal is the ideal of a holy God, that is, of One with a perfect balance of the infinite nature. Its ideal for man must, therefore, be that man shall gain for himself that balance in the human realm that God has in his divine realm. For this reason the Bible is a curber of excesses, a restorer of proportions. It gives here its largest lesson for pleasure. Recognizing its legitimacy, it recognizes its limits as well. As an example from both Testaments we may give a statement of conduct that receives rebuke from Moses and from Paul. It is recorded in Exodus that, after their riotings with the golden calf, the Israelites proceeded to engage in riotings of pleasure. [Pg 190] The ancient account puts it, "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Saint Paul quotes it in First Corinthians in precisely its original form. In the early account the rebuke of the Lord awaits the people. In the later account the apostle makes the conduct the natural accompaniment of idolatry, as if indeed the worship of an image would issue into the idolatry of the table and the playground. Now eating and drinking are not only good; they are necessary. Play is not only good; it is necessary. The Bible declares that food and water are the gifts of God, and it makes them symbols of God's deeper benevolence. Nor does the Bible ever condemn play. On the contrary, it represents the streets of the Holy City as filled with playing children. The trouble, then, must have been in the lack of proportion as well as in the lack of a good motive. The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play. This is to say that the two constant movements of life were monopolized by appetite and sport. The Israelites ate to play, and they played to eat. Two things intended to be legitimate portions of life became its illegitimate entirety. Designed to be preludes, eating and drinking and playing became the whole program. Life consisted in the satisfaction of two ranges of [Pg 191] desire. The demand of Moses and Paul was not that eating and drinking and playing should be abolished, but that they should be pushed back into their just proportions as worthy departments of living. The glutton of food and the glutton of play are both condemned by the Bible.

There are those who say that one of the crying evils of our own day is that the people are appetite-mad and pleasure-mad. Probably some men in every age have brought this charge against their time; and the charge is true as applied to some persons in each period. For such the Bible has its repeated warning. They who are lovers of pleasure more than of God fall under condemnation. Mankind has never long admired the eaters and players of history. If it remembers Beau Brummel and Beau Nash at all, it enrolls them in its lists of ridicule. An epitaph which recorded that "He ate much of the time and played the rest of the time," would not serve to enroll a man among the earth's heroes! The Bible and humanity are against the unbalanced devotees of the table and the parlor and the field of sports.

But the Bible and humanity unite again in their estimate of the other extreme. The mere ascetic secures curiosity rather than admiration. He has not learned how to follow Him [Pg 192] who often went to feasts and who sat down with his friends at the supper which they gave him at Bethany. It is said of him that "he was anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows." Jesus entered into the normal joys of life. He came eating and drinking, until his enemies seized upon his conduct and exaggerated it into a charge against him. He was present at weddings where joy reigned supreme. In all his teaching and by all his example he never proved himself an enemy to the normal pleasures of life. This particular emphasis is occasionally needed. It may not have as large a mission as has the warning against overdone appetite and play; but it has its message to that smaller

circle of the deceived who would drive joy from the world in the name of Christ. One of the hymns declares:

> The brightest things below the sky
> Yield but a flattering light;
> We should suspect some danger nigh
> Where we possess delight.

There is something morbid in this conception. The invitation to the religious life becomes gruesome. The sister of Pascal cared for him through a long and serious illness. Pascal came to love her so much that he feared that his affection was wicked. In a gloomy hour he wrote in his diary these words, "Lord, forgive me for loving my dear [Pg 193] sister so much!" Afterward his abnormal conscience worked again, and Pascal actually erased the word "dear." For such moods the Bible has a lesson. God "giveth us richly all things to enjoy." We would think it small glory for ourselves if our children should push our gifts away from their little hands with the idea that those selected gifts were perilous. God fills the world with possibilities of pleasure. Food and drink are not negative and tasteless. The paths of earth are not flowerless. Voices are not without music. Companionship is not lifeless. The Bible is the foe of wicked pleasure. The Bible is the foe of excessive pleasure. The Bible is the friend of legitimate and proportionate pleasure.

But while pleasure needs to be guarded and curbed, it is not either a burden to be lifted or a pain to be endured. Sorrow is both. Therefore sorrow demands some positive services from the Bible. We may be impatient with those doleful folks who speak of this world as a vale of tears or as a wilderness of woe! We may be inclined to quote the lines:

> I think we are too ready with complaint
> In this fair world of God's.

On the other hand, it is well to remember that the young, especially, see life almost [Pg 194] exclusively from the standpoint of hope and courage. The minister of the gospel begins to feel, when he reaches the age of forty, that he has not given enough comfort to his people. As he identifies himself closely with their lives he finds that most homes carry some secret sorrow and that most men and women have their own personal tragedies. You will recall the myth about the boatman whose duty it was to carry over the Styx the souls who departed from earth. He noticed that these souls mourned much and took the voyage unwillingly. He thought that it must be a very beautiful and joyful land that laid such hold on their hearts. So he secured leave of absence from his post of duty and made an excursion into the world. He discovered that for every birth there must eventually be a death; that every home that was made must in due season be broken; that men and women were troubled and maimed and sick. On all sides he saw the evidences of sorrow. He went back to his ferry greatly wondering why people should be sad because they left a sad world. This mythical picture is overdrawn, but it has its suggestion of truth. Earth does have its manifold sorrows. If all the burdens and pains and problems and anguishes of a single day could focus their influence upon any single [Pg 195] life, the result would be either a broken heart or an insane mind.

The Bible does not make light of sorrows. Its heroes have their troubles. Call the roll of its sons and daughters and you will find that at some time each one of them was a child of grief. The Book does not assign burden and pain and sorrow to the class of unrealities. Neither does it assign them to the class of negations. In the Bible sorrow is real and sorrow is positive. When Rachel weeps for her children, the scene is real. When David goes into the room in the tower over the gate and utters his pitiful lament over Absalom, the Book does not describe his anguish as an illusion. Paul's hunger and

thirst, and stripes and shipwrecks, and perils and imprisonments were not the vain froth of a mortal mind. Jesus's cross, and the thorns and the nails and the spear, and the tauntings of the passers-by, and the thirst, and the darkened face of the Father were not swept into the void by reciting a formula about the All. Jesus gave a promise to his disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He kept that promise. They walked the ways of martyrdom. Their spirits won victories over their flesh. Yet there is no hint that their persecutions and deaths were the fictions of error or the dreams of a night that did not exist. The Bible, being real, ministers to sorrow that is real. [Pg 196]

The Book, too, touches on all the phases of comfort that we may gather from the surface of life, only it does not make them either a full gospel of consolation or a large part of that gospel. Sometimes a word of Scripture will suggest the method of comparison implied in the statement, "It might be worse." Paul does this with one quick word. "Our *light* affliction," he puts it. We have lost one hand; we might have lost two! We have lost one eye; we might have lost both! We have been sick one week; it might have been a year! Sometimes this method carries us off into rather graceless comparisons of ourselves with other people as if, indeed, we were divine favorites. Can a man prove more divine providence for himself by assuming that there is less for another person? This road of comparison leads to phariseeism unless we watch carefully against a despicable by-path. Tennyson in his "In Memoriam," which is a poem of comfort, shows much impatience with this false form of consolation:

> One writes, "that other friends remain,"
> That loss is common to the race;
> And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain.
>
> [Pg 197]
>
> That loss is common would not make
> My own less bitter, rather more;
> Too common! Never morning wore
> To evening but some heart did break.

This method of comparison is inadequate. Whether the word "light" makes our imagination furnish the details of the worse affliction, or whether it contrasts our sorrows with the greater sorrows of others, it does not do enough for our smitten hearts.

Nor are we fully satisfied with the plea that sorrow is but "for a moment" and that we can be thankful for its brevity. There is comfort here, to be sure, but it has no final quality. Paul knew that, and so he gave the idea an incidental part of a sentence, and then went on to the deeper consolation. One poet puts it:

> Since the scope
> Must widen early, is it well to droop
> For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
> O pusillanimous heart! be comforted;
> And like a cheerful traveler, take the road,
> Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
> Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
> To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
> "Because the way is short, I thank thee, God."

The truth is that there is real comfort in all this only when pain's brevity contributes something to the good of the years and even to eternity. Thus the Bible does not give much space to the slight comforts of either comparison or brevity. These have their function, but they are the small helpers of the larger consolations. [Pg 198]

The Bible likewise gives as one of the comforts of sorrow that sorrow prepares us to console others' sorrows. Saint Paul uses this in his message to the Corinthians: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Here we are pushed back to the deepest sources of comfort. God comforts the sorrowful in order that other sorrowful ones may have comfort. The consolers are delegated by the great Consoler. It requires this reach clear back to the heart of God to rescue this suggestion from the superficial. One man has sorrow. He consoles others who have sorrow. Then you have two sorrows in your problem. In this way you would keep playing off sorrow against sorrow, without any fundamental explanation of any sorrow. The question is, Why any sorrow at all? If one of the by-products of sorrow is the power to comfort the sorrowing, we must still find some main product that will put the two sorrows together in a meaning of good. The God of [Pg 199] comfort must preside over both sorrows ere either sorrow shall yield its contribution to the sufferer. Paul saw this, and so he related our power to comfort others to the fact that we had gotten our comfort from the Father of all consolation.

It is thus clear that the Scriptures give place to all the minor elements in the ministry of sorrow. Its comparative lightness, its sure brevity, and its tuition for sympathy have their part in the Bible curriculum. The Scriptures also move onward to the vision of a God who cares. "Like as a father pitieth"—this is the message even of the Old Testament. It gives an answer to that piercing cry:

> What can it mean? Is it aught to Him
> That the nights are long and the sun is dim?
> Can he be touched by the griefs I bear
> Which sadden the heart and whiten the hair?
> Around his throne are eternal calms,
> And glad, strong music of happy psalms,
> And bliss unruled by any strife!
> How can he care for my little life?

The answer of the Bible is the vision of the pitying God. Our earthly friends have helped us in our sorrows by simply caring. They have come to us in the shadows, and their words and faces have told us that they cared. It is a strange feature of human psychology that just this gives us comfort. Our friends do not solve the problem for us. [Pg 200] They do not remove the cause of our pain. But they feel with us, and this is aid. Every sympathizer seems to lift a bit of the weight from our own hearts. When the Bible gives us the revelation of One who pitieth "like as a father pitieth," it brings God into that circle of helpfulness.

The lesson goes farther and deeper than this. Though we have not here used the words technically, the soul's dictionary draws a distinction between pity and sympathy. The pitier may never have walked the way that allows him to understand our grief; the sympathizer comes to us from some experience that permits him to remember those that are in bonds as bound with them. We cannot read the Bible long ere we discover that there is in God the capability of joy and sorrow. The passages are abundant that justify this statement. God can be pleased. God can be grieved. If men and women have been made in his image, and if we find in them the capability of pain and sorrow, we are driven to the conclusion that something corresponding thereto must be in the divine nature. The father in the parable of the prodigal son, sitting lonely and mournful in his home, represents God. The father in that same parable meeting his son in the roadway [Pg 201] and giving him glad welcome, and calling to his neighbors, "Rejoice with me," likewise represents God. The truth seems to be that the farther up we go in the grade of

being, the more capability of pain and of pleasure do we find. The polyp can neither suffer much nor enjoy much. The oyster can enjoy more and suffer more. The bird has its note of joy and its note of pain. Human beings have exquisite powers of enjoyment and equally exquisite powers of suffering. We may well believe that when we reach the perfect being of God both of these capabilities come to their highest. This is the meaning of that verse:

> Can it be, O Christ Eternal,
> That the wisest suffer most?
> That the mark of rank in nature
> Is capacity for pain?
> That the anguish of the singer
> Makes the sweetness of the strain?

We are allowed to believe, then, that the pity of God passes over into sympathy. We are visited in our sorrows not by a God whose mood toward us is abstract, but whose own infinite heart knows grief. "The human life of God" is a phrase that has been used to describe the incarnation. That phrase enters into our problem here. If Jesus shows us what God is like, then the Christ who wept over Jerusalem brings us one revelation of [Pg 202] the divine life. The pitying God becomes the sympathizing God.

The biblical lesson of comfort does not halt even here. It is given a closer and more personal quality. A pitier and sympathizer may be very distant, and his aid may reach us over the abysses. If the Bible gives us the vision of a pitying father, it gives us also the vision of the God who comforteth even as a mother comforteth. In the various kinds of trouble men become aware of reserve forces in their nature. They endure what they thought they could not endure. In crisis times the muscles secure extra strength, the mind secures extra alertness, and the spirit secures extra power either to do or to bear. These reserves must be of God's giving, whether they lie ready in the nature always, or are special gifts sent direct to help us in the troublous hours. There is, however, a still more personal interpretation that the Bible offers for these experiences. They are the special visits of God to the afflicted. If the creed of the divine sympathy gets its meaning from "the human life of God" as seen in the incarnation of Christ, this part of the creed gets its meaning from the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is true that the Greek word which is translated "Comforter" might be given other meanings such as Adviser [Pg 203] or Helper. But this does not change the point for the present discussion. An Adviser in sorrow is a Comforter, and a Helper in sorrow is a Comforter. It is significant that the consciousness of the church followed the translators eagerly and adopted the word Comforter as if it met some need of life and as if it answered to some deep experience of life. We may not go into a labored discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. We may affirm that a humanity that sorrows is glad for a doctrine of the Godhead that magnifies the office of consolation. The comforting quality in Barnabas led the early disciples to change his name from Joses to Barnabas because he was a "son of consolation." They rejoiced in their human comforter. The church has ever found satisfaction in the revelation of a divine Comforter. In this revelation it sees the pitying God and the sympathizing God become the Comforting God.

Related to this is the scriptural idea that God conquers our sorrow not by removing it but by making us equal to its burden. The clearest concrete illustration of this is seen in Paul's words about his "thorn in the flesh." His thrice-repeated prayer was that the thorn might be removed; his answer was that, while the difficulty would not be taken away, he would be given grace sufficient for his trial. Paul's experience has impressed [Pg 204] men as being typical of the inner kind of divine aid. The sorrow may be of many kinds; but the powers of resistance are strengthened by the grace of God and the sorrows are borne in a brave and patient spirit. Although the idea be trite, it claims a place in the

discussion, as indeed it was worthy of a place in the ritual of comfort. We are not dealing with any mere law of reaction. It was not the thorn that was making Paul strong; it was God who was making Paul strong to endure the thorn. He himself describes the transaction as if it had involved a direct gift of the divine grace, as it had involved a direct message from the divine heart.

Yet great as are all these types of biblical consolation, we all feel that we have not reached the conclusion of the matter. Comparison is not enough. Brevity does not explain why sorrow should be just brief. Pity does not tell us why we should need to be pitied. Direct spiritual reserves do not fully justify the hard experience that calls for them. Direct and personal comfort does not solve the problem since no one would seek trouble in order to have the visits of a comforting friend. The gaining of inner strength comes nearer to a positive warrant for the sorrows of life; yet it does not quite reach the [Pg 205] satisfying conception. All these things are parts of the program, but they are not its conclusion. The tale of life's sorrow is not all told by their recital. The full story we cannot understand now; still we may be able to glimpse its meaning. In the epic of Job there are traces of the revelation. The patriarch gathers a harvest out of his troubles. They never reach the uttermost extreme. They do not last forever. They bring him pity, however crude; sympathy, however bungling; comforters, however mistaken; reserve forces, however tardy; inner strength, however won. But his sorrows do more than this; they are represented in the last chapter as having been made the servant of Job. The richer and stronger man returns to the richer and stronger life. The testings have been turned into gains.

This deeper lesson of comfort is often given to us in the Bible by means of a very positive verb. Our afflictions "work" for us. All things "work" together for us. As men are sent to the fields, and as the forces of nature are sent along the wires, so sorrows are sent to become our servants. This service is not inevitable; it is conditioned on the attitude of the sorrowing life; but it is a very real service when the conditions are met. Our afflictions work for us—when we get the spiritual vision so that we can receive the [Pg 206] things that are eternal. All things work together for good for us—when we fulfill the innermost requirement of loving God. The condition in both cases is located within the spiritual life. This condition being met, the promise of the Bible is that sorrow is made our efficient servant. Paul in his famous verse of consolation states the case with marked confidence. The afflictions work for us until they produce "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Language could scarcely be stronger. Nor were the words used by one who lolled in the high places of ease and delight and shouted down his abstract comforts to the strugglers in the vale. The assurance to the sorrowing comes from their comrade. His experiences ranged all the way from the petty hardships of a wandering life on to the Appian Way and the block of death. It was the sure faith of the apostle that all his sorrows had been made to work for him. He was not their victim; he was their master and their beneficiary.

The persons who have seen much of the world's better living will not deny this conception. Le Gallienne in his booklet, If I Were God, admits that suffering does often work toward the making of character and becomes a real servant. His skepticism does [Pg 207] not lie at this point. His inquiry is whether a just and good God could not have found some easier way, some servant for which we would not have to render such a painful cost. This, of course, is that old method of debate that flees for refuge to some imaginary world and conceives of people who do not exist. Our task is with the people now on earth, and with them we must deal in our efforts at consolation. Some of them we have seen driven to bitterness of spirit by their sorrow. They themselves made sorrow an evil servant which filled the garden of life with noxious weeds, shut the windows of hope in the home of life, put the poison of despair into the water of life, and spread the clouds of gloom over all the sky of life. Others we have seen mellowed

and sweetened by the servantship of sorrow. All our visits to them showed clearly that sorrow was doing gracious service. The "weight of glory" was more and more apparent. The "good" produced by the "all things" gave increasing evidence that the "servant" was doing his work. When any close observer of life writes down his lists of saints he will always find that he has been compelled to canonize many who, like their Master, have been made "perfect through suffering."

The quotation of these words about Christ reminds us that the world turns to him as to the last resort for the sorrowing. Here, as in all other studies, we find the climax in him. As he entered into all forms of work, so did he enter into all forms of sorrow. Is it homelessness? Is it privation? Is it misunderstanding? Is it anxiety for others? Is it anticipated suffering? Is it evil accusation? Is it ridicule? Is it shame? Is it mockery? Is it torture? Is it utter disgrace? Is it abandonment? Is it denial? Is it betrayal? Is it death? All these he knew. If the wisest and holiest suffer most, he knew all these sorrows at their deepest. None could really join with him in chanting the real De Profundis. He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him. The world that left him alone in his sorrow does not wish him to leave it alone in its sorrow. It seeks him then. It hears him as he promises, not immunity from suffering, but the experience of overcoming in suffering: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." He put a deeply personal quality into his assurance, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." "I am with you always, even unto the end of the æons." So runs the promise. It is no wonder that the troubled flee to him. The Man of Sorrows draws the men of sorrows. His benediction of peace is not formal. With the authority and with the reserves of comfort at his command, he still says, "Let not your heart be troubled." [Pg 208] [Pg 209]

To the usual messages of consolation he now adds the eternal reason, "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." Well did Carlyle say that if Jesus were only man, he had no right to utter these words. But Jesus said much more. He would prepare the place. He would come again. He would receive them into his company. If some doubter shall ask about the way, his reply shall be the same as of old, "I am the way." Through him alone we come to the Father. Full trust in him removes all bitter tears: and the remainder of tears he does not rebuke. He inspires the visions wherein we see those who have come up out of great tribulation hungering no more, nor thirsting any more, nor smitten by the sun or any heat; but fed by the Lamb and led by him amid fountains of living waters, while God wipes away all tears from their eyes.

This doctrine of heaven as a consolation for sorrow is not born of selfishness, as is often charged. The rankest of infidels said, "In the night of death, hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing." Not "listening selfishness," but "listening love"! The love that we bear to our own and to all mankind seeks this vision and finds it waiting in the divine plan. Is it selfish to desire that for ourselves which will injure none others? Is it selfish to long for that which will meet the longings of the whole world? Verily some critics discover strange dictionaries when they define words in reference to the holy faith. But all the while the afflicted seek the face of Christ. Troubles look unto him and are lightened. The poor man cries and the Lord still delivers him out of his troubles. Our Bibles and our Hymnals personalize the haven for us. He is the Rock of Ages. His bosom is the Refuge. To him we go when shadows darkly gather. A present help is he. The last low whispers of our dead are burdened with his name. The suffering world states its comfort in terms of Christ himself. [Pg 210]

For the final sorrow of death he offers the full consolation. The tragedy of separation remains. Our indictment against death is that of Tennyson:

> He puts our lives so far apart,
> We cannot hear each other speak.

The more worthy of immortality our beloved seems to be, the keener is the pang of parting. Lowell felt it so "After the Burial": [Pg 211]

Immortal! I feel it and know it,
Who doubts it of such as she?
But that is the pang's very secret—
Immortal away from me.

The Bible has no rebuke for the sorrow of separation. But it does have the healing hope of eternal reunion. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." These words, fully believed, still our fear, confirm our hope, and comfort our final sorrow.

To all the burdened, Jesus says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." To all the joyless he says, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." To all the lonely and mourning he comes with the message, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." The world may have difficulty in securing that belief; but the world knows well that this belief alone is the defeat of sorrow. In their best and most desperate and most hopeful hours men flee to the Bible as to the only tent in which their anguish can be soothed. Within that tabernacle walks the form of the Fourth. When they turn from him, they must return [Pg 212] with the question, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The eternal life that he gives is the only consolation for our passing sorrows.

CHAPTER VIII [Pg 213]

The Bible and Practice

When men separate the Bible from devotion and practice they are guilty of the final heresy in relation to the Book of Life. The previous pages have shown that the Bible has a real message for actual living. While the larger departments have been treated, it is still true that the message of the Scriptures for other sections of life is vital and fundamental. Whatever we may say about the message of the Bible in regard to chemistry, or biology, or geology; whatever we may say about its inspiration for the literature of the world; and whatever we may say about its accuracy in matters of ancient history and geography—the Book holds a lonely primacy as the Book of Duty. The scientist may not get from it a full revelation; the littérateur may be tempted to omit certain portions from his "choice selections"; the historian may not find in it a full or chronological list of events; but the man with a moral and spiritual passion, the man bent on finding his duty that he may do it faithfully, will discover ample material in its [Pg 214] pages. Indeed, he will have a sense of surplus. The ideals of the Book will be so far beyond his performance as to give him the feeling of a gentle rebuke. As a Book of moral science, moral literature, moral history, the Bible has no competitors. As a revelation of the heart of God, of the heart of man, and of the way in which the heart of God and the heart of man are brought into loving harmony, the Bible is supreme.

The great difficulty in the use of the Bible has come from wrenching it from this main purpose. Confusion is sure to arise whenever any volume is employed apart from its primary intent. If one wishes to learn mathematics, and his foolish teacher shall give him a book of music, the result is not edifying. The pages of the book may be properly numbered, and the scales of music may be denoted by the correct fractions; but mathematics represents a thoroughly subordinate purpose, and the volume does not lead easily on to Calculus. The result is even more confusing if the arithmetic be handed to a pupil who wishes to study versification. The multiplication table may look like verses when seen at some distance; still the arithmetic's main intent is not the teaching of poetry. The illustrations of possible confusion could be taken from all fields. The common sense of the race saves it from the blunder of misapplying the most [Pg 215] of its books. The Bible, however, has been subjected to misapplication because the theory of its infallibility has often been made to cover a wide, not to say a universal, range. The student who goes to the Bible with a purpose that is mainly historical, or scientific, or geographical, or genealogical, or mathematical, or even poetical and literary, may not find all his wishes gratified. But the student who seeks its pages under a profound sense of God and with an equally profound will to do God's will is certain to find material for all his moral and spiritual ambitions.

Consequently when the religious attitude toward the Bible is changed into a professional or critical or debating attitude, the Book is deflected from its intent. Doubtless we must have in the realm of scholarship some men who give themselves to a technical discussion of the Bible. These men may be charged with the duty of recovering portions of the Book to reality; and they may have an important, but secondary, relation to its primary purpose. Nevertheless their attitude is not the final one. It would be useless to deny that the last generation has witnessed a changed attitude toward the Holy Scriptures. One result has been that two camps have been formed, and that doughty champions of a view have sallied forth from each camp to do [Pg 216] warfare. The missiles have been verbal. Sometimes they have been abusive. Each champion has believed himself a David and his opponent a Goliath. The unprejudiced observer of the conflict has had difficulty in deciding which champion has been most guilty of a wrong spirit. The conservative has called the progressive various names, infidel, atheist, destroyer, betrayer, a successor of Judas in spirit and of Celsus in method! The progressive has responded in kind and has named the conservative a reactionary, an intellectual coward, a defender of a discredited theory, a foe of liberty, and a traitor to the truth. The conservative has often become a spiritual Pharisee and has ruled the progressive out of court on the ground that the progressive lacked piety, while the progressive has often become an intellectual Pharisee and has ruled the conservative out of court on the ground that the conservative lacked scholarship. There have, of course, been conspicuous instances of breadth and catholicity on both sides, but occasionally the spirit of the contest has not tended to exalt the mood of the contestants or to glorify the divine Book.

The results of such a spirit could easily be predicted: they cannot make for edification. If we list on one side the radical conservatives and on the other side the radical [Pg 217] progressives, we shall discover an evangelical helplessness in both lists. In each case a conception of the Bible supplants the purpose of the Bible. The champion defends a doctrine more than he promotes a life. The apologist overcomes the preacher. The theorist destroys the evangelist. All this is not a denial that the speculative emphasis has its place. The defender of the faith will always have his place. Usually he must work in the background, in some point of scholarly retreat. The pastor and preacher who goes into a community with the idea that his main mission is to promote a special view of inspiration is doomed to failure, while he who goes into a community with the idea that his main mission is to preach the salvation of the Bible as it climaxes in Christ cannot fail utterly. There are conservatives and progressives whose ministry is pitiably

weak, and there are progressives and conservatives whose ministry is grandly strong. The difference comes from the point of emphasis. If a man is more anxious to prove that Moses was the sole author of the Pentateuch than he is to prove that Jesus is the sole author of salvation, his ministry will answer to his own emphasis. If a man is more anxious to prove that there were two Isaiahs than he is to show that there is one only name given among men whereby we may be saved, his ministry will be no more [Pg 218] important than is his contention. The primary purpose of the Bible is not the revelation of the single authorship of one of its sections or the dual authorship of one of its books; its primary purpose is to declare that One is our Master, even Christ.

It must be plain that, as the divine revelation of the Bible culminates in a Life, so the human intent of the Bible can culminate only in lives. The purpose of the Bible is met in Practice. If we adopt the military figure of life, the Bible is a weapon given to men for moral warfare. Sometimes in its own pages the Word of God is presented under the figure of a Sword. The writers could not have had in mind the Scriptures as we have them now; but the principle applies to every revelation by which God seeks to bring men to the understanding and doing of his own will. When Isaiah felt divine messages burning in his heart he said, "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." The writer of Hebrews took the same nervous metaphor and wrote, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." Paul in his description of the Christian armor speaks of "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It may [Pg 219] not be amiss, then, to take this highly authorized figure of speech and to employ it once again—not claiming, of course, that our particular applications were in the thought of the first users. The point is that under the ancient military system the sword had its main intent, and that it never did its real work as long as it was divorced from that intent. There were wrong uses of the sword, and there were secondary uses of the sword; and there was but one primary use of the sword.

We can conceive of an actual sword as being used in different ways by different people. A robber seizes it, defends himself against just arrest, and slashes the representatives of a righteous law. Evidently the sword was not made for that purpose. The sportsman takes the sword, tests its handle, polishes its blade, tries its resiliency, purchases a manual of arms, secures the best teacher, drills himself in its use. On holidays he wears a flashy uniform, marches through the streets, waves the glittering thing over his head, and so makes it an instrument of personal flourish. This use is not evil, but it does not stand for the weapon's first intent. A third man, with a more serious mien, secures the sword. He is enlisted in the militia, and the time may come when it will be necessary for him to go into real war. He tests its handle and polishes its blade; he studies the [Pg 220] manual of arms; he seeks the best masters; he practices its use through many months. When the time of war actually comes this man draws the sword from its scabbard and goes out to do service in his country's cause. The primary purpose of the sword is met only in this earnest use.

The three men may represent three classes in their attitudes toward the Bible. The Bible is often used for defense in immoralities. It is often used as a means of that cheap skill that comes near to personal display. It is often used for spiritual defense and warfare. The robber's use is evil. The parader's use is secondary. The warrior's use is primary.

Many illustrations of the immoral use of the Bible could be given. In the story of the temptation of Jesus the devil is pictured as a user of the Scriptures, and he has not been without his followers in an unholy use of a holy record. The Bible covers a wide range of thought and experience. It tells of all manner of sins. It deals with all classes of characters. It presents the lives of bad men who were sometimes good, and of good men who were occasionally bad, and of other men who were quite steadily bad or

good. Thus the Bible gives us all sorts of examples. The record, distorted and misapplied, may be made to justify the baldest of sins. In matters of questionable morality men are ever ready to appeal to the divine Book, and even for actions condemned by all enlightened moral judgment the Bible is sometimes summoned as an advocate. There is scarcely a sin which has not had a passage of Scripture presented as its excuse. Men have justified rash murder on the ground that Moses killed the cruel Egyptian taskmaster. As was shown in a previous chapter the practices of the patriarchs have been quoted, even in the halls of Congress, as a warrant for bigamy and polygamy. Men in the midst of unreasoning anger have condoned their madness by reciting the words, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Jesus himself named to the Jews a sacrilegious misuse of a Bible phrase by which heartless children excused themselves from filial duties. Illustrations might be given touching almost every phase of personal life. Even as in old days the wicked sometimes fled to a city of refuge, so now do men caught in an evil mood hide themselves behind a biblical rampart. [Pg 221]

In larger social matters this use of the Bible has been fully as striking. Human slavery felt secure within a scriptural fortress. Wilberforce and Clarkson in England, and Garrison and Phillips in America were compelled to reply to biblical arguments. Charles Sumner, at a meeting in Massachusetts, spent an entire evening in replying to a pro-slavery discussion based on Paul's letter to Philemon, arriving duly at the conviction that the only logical and religious result of the apostle's words to Philemon would be the freeing of slaves in the name of Christian brotherhood. So pieces of Mosaic legislation and scraps of Pauline regulation were used to conceal the Golden Rule and the law of fraternity. It is easy to observe here, too, that as men advance in ethical life this use of the Bible ceases. Doubtless in twenty years no one has heard the Bible quoted in behalf of slavery. Yet the biblical argument would serve quite as well for reinstating slavery as it did for continuing slavery. The argument dies not only because the moral consciousness of man lives, but also because the moral judgment of man perceives that the general principles of the Bible are utterly opposed to human slavery. The man who proposed to bring the bondage of men back into the social life of the world by means of the biblical argument would be deemed as much an anachronism as his method of debate. [Pg 222]

This same evil use of the Bible proceeds to-day among the opponents of the temperance reform. Our debate with the saloonist or brewer or wine maker never goes far ere we are told of biblical examples of drinking, as well as that Christ turned water into wine in his first miracle at Cana of Galilee. Saloon keepers have framed and have placed upon the walls of their alluring palaces Paul's advice to Timothy, "Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." They do not quote the verdict that wine is a mocker, with a bite like that of a serpent and a sting like that of an adder —the cause of woes and sorrows and redness of eyes; nor the pronouncement that no drunkard can inherit the Kingdom; nor the condemnation laid upon him that putteth the bottle to his neighbor's lips. Nor do they put forward the inevitable drift of Paul's law of charity which commands men to do naught that will make their brothers to offend. Nor yet do they heed the sure drift of the Bible's teaching as it comes to its crown in Christ himself. The man who would claim that Jesus would approve the modern traffic in intoxicating liquors would convict himself of amazing perversity and ignorance. There are increasing evidences that the Master of life is now finding an effective use for his whip of cords and that there is beginning a retreat greater than that of the ancient thieves and dove sellers. The time will come when men will marvel that an attempt was ever made to use the Bible as a foundation for the trade in alcoholics. [Pg 223] [Pg 224]

In Scott's Ivanhoe there is given an example of this misuse of the Bible, as well as an example of its effective rebuke. Rebecca the Jewess is beautiful in person, as she is in character. Brian de Bois-Guilbert is a member of the Order of the Holy Temple. He is a

dashing, handsome, hypocritical crusader, both a military and a moral adventurer. He turns his lewd eye toward Rebecca. She stands by an open window, ready to throw herself to death upon the rocks far beneath rather than to submit herself to his wickedness. To justify his black intention Guilbert mentions the conduct of David and Solomon, and then says to the tempted one, "The protectors of Solomon's Temple may claim license by the example of Solomon." The beautiful woman makes a worthy retort, one that deserves frequent repetition: "If thou readest the Scriptures and the lives of the saints only to justify thine own license and profligacy, thy crime is like that of him who extracts poison from the most helpful herbs." No honest person can believe in Guilbert's use of the Bible; nor can any honest person escape the truth of Rebecca's reply. The murderer's, the bigamist's, the slaveholder's, the rum-seller's, the sensualist's method of employing the Bible is the final blasphemy against the Holy [Pg 225] Word. The robbers of life simply steal the sword of the Spirit in order that they may use it in the service of hell. Wolves in sheep's clothing and devils clad in the livery of heaven are apt figures of speech for the description of this perversity. The Bible itself speaks of those who wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction!

The second use of the sword moves into the realm of the legitimate, but not into the realm of the final. Expert swordsmanship is no crime, even as it is not the highest morality. The Bible has long been one of the favorite fields of the critical scholar. Very often the search has been for technical truth rather than for vital truth. Heated discussions have related to questions of dates and authorship. These questions are not to be ruled out as useless. Sometimes technical truth gives the vital truth of the Bible a setting that makes it more forceful and persuasive. It was inevitable that both the higher critics and their opponents would sometimes go to great extremes—the critics to an idolatry of intellect, their opponents to an idolatry of literalness. We must all have been impressed that at times when the spiritual battle has been intense the warriors have stepped aside from the main conflict in order that they might discuss how and when [Pg 226] and by whom the Sword and its parts were fashioned!

We may change the figure of speech for a moment and modify for the present purpose a borrowed illustration. A man finds a casket buried deeply in his yard. The vessel appears to have been constructed a long time ago. It bears upon its sides characters that are difficult of translation. There is even doubt as to the nature of the metal. The man summons the other members of the family. They open the vessel and discover that it is filled with gold. At once a warm dispute begins over several questions. Who made the casket? When was it made? How many persons took part in its fashioning and its filling? From what precise mintage did the coins come? What is the meaning of the peculiar hieroglyphics found upon its sides? Are all the coins of equal value? Whose images are stamped upon them? The debaters become excited over these mooted matters. At last one sensible member of the family suggests that it is apparent that by right of finding this particular household owns the casket; that the needs of the members are many; that the gold, even though the coinage be ancient, can be turned to modern use; that the questions which they are debating can be settled only by metallurgists and historians and philologists, if they are to be settled at all; and that, [Pg 227] pending the settlement of incidental issues, the wants of the family may be richly met by appropriating the contents of the casket! The illustration scarcely needs any interpretation. It surely does represent the attitude which the devout and obedient heart may take in this period toward the Holy Book. The ancient casket that we call the Bible is full of treasures. This much lies beyond doubt or debate. While the learned philologists and historians and exegetes surround the casket and try to ascertain the dates of its parts, the names of its authors, the meaning of its obscurities, the family of God may continue to draw on its exhaustless treasures. Nor are there wanting signs that more and more our age is adjusting itself to this reverent and practical use of the Word

of God, and that Professor Dobschütz rightly contends in his new volume that the Bible is again becoming the Book of Devotion.

There is likewise what we might well call the "lowest" criticism—the spirit that uses the Bible as a volume of puzzles rather than as a volume of directions. Many a man has spent more time in speculating about where Cain got his wife than he has in trying to find out how to make his own wife happy. Many a man has spent more time in trying to find out about the Witch of Endor as an excuse for his consulting some vulgar fortune- [Pg 228]
teller of modern time than he has spent in trying to learn the will and secure the guidance of the good and wise God. Many a man has spent more time in discussing Melchizedek, who had neither ancestors nor descendants, than he has spent in trying to learn from the Bible how he himself may honor his forbears and may train his own children in righteousness. Many a man has been so piqued by curiosity about the exact nature of Saint Paul's "thorn in the flesh" as to forget the teaching that the grace of God can make us equal to any burden and torment of life. The men of this type will not allow the Bible the use of hyperbole. When it suits their contentious mood they become strict literalists. Even though they themselves may declare that it is "raining pitchforks" or that the waves are dashing "mountain high," they will insist that Christ's words about the two coats and the two cloaks and the two miles are not the strong urging of much forbearance and generosity, but the counsel of literal folly. Meanwhile the certainties and duties of the Bible outnumber its riddles and its curiosities many-fold. The importunate call to holy practice ceases not. From each of a thousand passages of the Good Book there issues a patient rebuke for the curiosity monger, "What is that to [Pg 229]
thee? Follow thou me."

This leads us to the third use of the sword as seen in our illustration. The gallant soldier took the weapon and used it in harmony with its intent. So the Bible should be employed preeminently as a means of spiritual defense and warfare. The Scriptures are profitable, not for immoral justification, not for mere criticism however exact and searching, not for the solving of superficial riddles, but "for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." To go to the Bible with the motive revealed in these great words is to recover the Bible to its divine purpose as the book of human practice. Such a motive lifts the volume above any mere literary or historical aspects. There is, for example, the oft-quoted story about Benjamin Franklin's experience at the Court of France. He was passing an evening with a company of cultured ladies and gentlemen. The conversation turned to the subject of Oriental life. Franklin read aloud to the company the book of Ruth. Struck by the beautiful simplicity and spirit of the narrative, his hearers expressed their delight and desired to know in what book the charming pastoral could be found! It is safe to say that these men and women needed [Pg 230]
the lesson of fidelity in the book of Ruth far more than they needed the sense of its literary merit.

We must always return to the idea that the key to the Bible is the deeply religious instinct and motive. Nothing else will really open its pages. Nor does the Bible herein wholly differ from other literature. There are men and women so thoroughly cultivated on the so-called practical side of their natures that it would be punishment for them to read Whittier, or Longfellow, or Lowell, or Tennyson for a full hour. The demands of business or social life have killed the poetic impulse. So many persons may crush from their natures the religious instinct and then wonder why the Bible does not appeal to them! The truth seems to be that a person gets from the Bible about what he seeks. It takes divinely opened eyes to see the wondrous things in the law. The psalmist, therefore, prayed that the change might come over himself rather than over the parchment. The way to illumine the sacred page was to illumine him. The Book may lie in a great light, but what can the Book do for a man with closed eyes? Seneca tells of

an idiot child in his home who, becoming blind, insisted always that the room was dark! Herein is another parable.

It is only this disposition of the seeing eye and the obedient hand that can bring the Bible to us in its main purpose. Having this disposition we shall not suffer ourselves to be lured into interesting byways. We shall have a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. Our spiritual purpose will defeat all needless criticism and all needless dissection. Having this purpose, we will turn to the early chapters of Genesis. Instead of debating whether in a literal garden Adam and Eve were tempted by a literal serpent to the eating of literal fruit, and were driven through a literal gate, while a literal angel with a literal flame running along a literal blade guarded against reentrance, we shall be moved by the thought that we have lifted ourselves in puny rebellion against God, and that we have gone forth from our place of innocence, and that the third chapter of Genesis recounts the essential history of our souls. Having this religious purpose, we shall read the story of Job with a view to securing its spiritual lesson. We shall not permit any critical arguer to confine us to the question of the historicity of Job himself. We shall rather lay hold of the teaching of that marvelous book, with its colossal debate, and we shall see that, whether the book be a history or a parable or an allegory, it drives crushing suspicion from the world by teaching that suffering is not always the result of sin, and brings cheerful trust into the world by teaching that afflictions bravely endured must have their reward. The man who back in that dim and far age got hold of the teaching of the book of Job must have somehow caught the inspiration of God himself. The common ground in all these mooted portions of Scripture is really a large and wealthy place; but only a common spiritual purpose will ever bring conservatives and progressives together in the knowledge and peace of God.

[Pg 231]

[Pg 232]

One almost hesitates to discuss the book of Jonah in this connection because petty debates have robbed it of much of its deeper meaning. The nature of the book doubtless lies beyond earthly settlement. Whether we declare that Jonah's journey was as historical as those of Saint Paul, or that it was as parabolic as the journey of the prodigal son, we can find no sure end of the debate. But all the while the teaching of the book waits for our obedience. The individual lesson seems to be that whenever a man turns his ship from the Nineveh of duty toward the Tarshish of pleasure he will directly come to rough and perilous seas. In other words, the man who flees from his God-assigned work sooner or later gets into trouble. The missionary lesson is just as plain. Back yonder in a time of racial narrowness, some one caught the inspiration from God and declared that the Lord of all the earth cared for all the people of the earth. The infinite love traveled beyond all our little boundaries. The personal lesson and the missionary lesson of the book of Jonah are sufficient to keep individuals and churches busy for a thousand years to come. The spirit with which we approach the book of Jonah will decide whether we shall become petty debaters, or men and women with dutiful purpose and missionary zeal.

[Pg 233]

The conclusion is that when we seek the Bible with the motive of holy practice we never meet with disappointment. The religious purpose saves the Book for us and saves us by the Book. This purpose will likewise bring us face to face with the Hero of the Divine Word. Other sacred literatures may offer us high moral precepts, and they may occasionally give us glimpses of spiritual ideals. But one Book alone gives us Christ. One Book alone reveals the Redeemer. The climax of practice to which the Scriptures call us is the following of Christ. In all our studies in these chapters we have found that the supreme lessons centered in his teaching and in his example. The Man, the Home, the School, the Workshop, the Market Place, the Playground, and the Hospital all wait upon him for their guidance and their warning. But Jesus is more than the way and the truth; he is the Life. He is more than the Exemplar of Practice; he is the Helper in Practice. He walks the pages of the Bible even as he walked the ancient paths, and his

[Pg 234]

disciples may still say, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Other sacred books may offer revelations of morality; the Bible offers the revelation of a Saviour. The Bible is not its own goal. Jesus is the end of its revelation. The devout in all ages have been ready to use the heart of the verse of a familiar hymn:

Beyond the sacred page,
I seek thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for thee,
Thou living Word.

If men seek the Exemplar who will give them a goal for their practice, they find such an Exemplar in the Christ of the Bible. If they seek the Inspirer who will give them a longing for the perfect practice, they will find that Inspirer in the Christ of the Bible. If men seek the Saviour who will help them on to the perfect practice, they will find that Helper in the Christ of the Bible.

Indeed, it may be said to be characteristic of the Bible that it not only offers the perfect program, but that it offers the perfect help. This was true even of the Old Testament. Jehovah was the strength of life. His power was as immediate as his presence. He was a present help in time of trouble. He was a present Guide in time of perplexity. The Christian revelation seems to bring that consciousness of divine help nearer to men, and to make it more real. Hence the Christian faith goes over all the world seeking to win men to God and his righteousness. Everywhere it proclaims a redeeming God. An ideal without a Saviour may become a despair—a tormenting impossibility, the lure of the final falsehood. The Bible gives the ideal and then it adds, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The Bible warns against temptation, and then it tells of One who was himself tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, of One who is able to succor them that are tempted. The religion of the dead code becomes the religion of the living Person. The Ideal becomes Example, and both Ideal and Example are found in a Saviour. [Pg 235]

With all this in our purpose, as well as in our creed, we come to the Bible in full harmony with its primary intent. We find now that for every moral and spiritual emergency the Book has its message. If it were necessary we could list these emergencies and show the word that the Bible has for each of them. Here is an illustration that serves as well as a thousand for making the main point. The Gideons have been placing the Bibles in the hotels of America. Travelers seldom go to their rooms without seeing upon the table a copy of the Book. The organization that has done this good work often receives accounts, anonymous or otherwise, of the help given by the Bibles that its work has supplied. Here is a letter received from a young woman: [Pg 236]

> Perhaps a word will help you to realize that the little “Good Book” on the table in a lonely hotel room helps some. Last night, after fighting the fight that any young woman with any appearance fights, I found myself in Chicago at this hotel. I had papers, magazines, books, and other reading matter, but for a joke—yes, joke—I picked up the Bible. It fell open at the seventieth psalm. Can you imagine the impression it made on me? I read it again and again. Needless to say, it helped and I feel better, happier, and not so much alone.

Picture the full circumstances, and we may feel that the help went deeper and wrought more than this letter indicates. If this young woman was at the beginning of that dreadful path of death that invites careless travelers, how much must these ancient words, so graciously modern, have meant to her? “Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after [Pg 237]

my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, Aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying." Any study of the authorship or date of this seventieth psalm, or any theorizing as to the identity of "The chief musician," or even any discussion of the particular circumstances under which the words were originally written would not have solved the life problem of a young woman coaxed on toward carelessness. The psalm was penned to make God real, and his help real. Doubtless it performed that office long ago; and surely it performs that office now whenever a needy heart supplicates the good God by means of the ancient prayer. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee"—this was the psalmist's statement as to the reason for carrying portions of the ancient revelation with him on all his journeys. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word"—this was the use of God's Word prescribed [Pg 238] for all time. The writer of the one hundred and nineteenth psalm did not have our Bible, but when he wrote these two verses he had within him the purpose of our Bible. He brought the ancient law within its primary intent, and he gave the principle by which all later Scripture should be employed. The Bible is to be placed in the heart as a defense against sin. The Bible is intended to cleanse the ways of life. The Bible is given to lead us to Him who is himself the Perfect Life and who offers the Divine Grace.

All this means that the best apologetic for the Bible is the earnest and honest use of the Bible. We may well use the apostle's fine phrase and say that those persons who follow the ideals of the Bible under the inspiration of the Saviour of the Bible are "living epistles known and read of all men." They are the modern evidences for the ancient Book, the human and divine proofs of the human and divine Book. The Bible does not fail the soul that searches its pages for the paths of truth and righteousness. The prayer of the ritual is that we may "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life." In everything that bears on making men worthy subjects of everlasting [Pg 239] life the Bible is the sure guide. All sincere souls that come to its chapters with this primary and spiritual intent will find their due reward. They may stand before the open Book confident that the voice of God will speak through the written Word and determined that they themselves shall ever be in the attitude of eager listeners, saying, "Speak, Lord; for thy servants hear."